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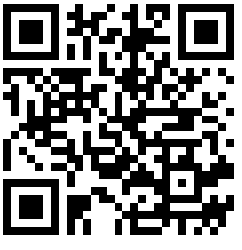

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AN EASY WAY TO EARN £100. (SEE PAGE 715.)

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 366. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 4TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

BE SURE TO KEEP IT WELL.

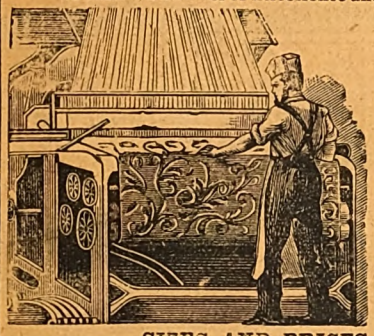
THIS ADVERTISEMENT.

WONDERFUL BARGAINS!

IMMENSE REDUCTION IN PRICES OF OUR WORLD-RENOWNED

BRUSSELETTE CARPETS.

ADMITTEDLY THE CHEAPEST IN THE WORLD. Seamless, Woven, and Reversible, Rich Turkey Patterns and Colourings, Superior Quality, with Handsome Border to match, a Marvel of Excellence and Beauty.



These Carpets are splendid imitations of Real Brussels Carpets, the designs having been carefully copied from the originals, both as regards colourings and patterns, so that when in use it is almost impossible, except by close scrutiny, to detect the difference. They have gained a world-wide reputation for magnificence, cheapness, and utility, having no equal. All designs are registered and deservedly considered works of art.

SIZES AND PRICES.

	ft.	in.		ft.	in.	Sale Price. s. d.	Former Price. s. d.
No. 1	9	0	by	6	0	5 6	9 0
,, 2	9	0	,,	7	6	7 0	11 0
,, 3	9	0	,,	9	0	8 6	13 6
,, 4	10	6	,,	7	6	8 9	13 9
,, 5	10	6	,,	9	0	10 0	15 6
,, 6	12	0	,,	9	0	11 6	18 0
,, 7	10	6	,,	10	6	12 0	18 6
,, 8	12	0	,,	10	6	13 6	20 6

	ft.	in.		ft.	in.	Sale Price. s. d.	Former Price. s. d.
No. 9	15	0	by	9	0	14 3	22 6
,, 10	13	6	,,	10	6	15 3	24 0
,, 11	12	0	,,	12	0	15 3	24 0
,, 12	13	6	,,	12	0	17 0	27 0
,, 13	15	0	,,	12	0	19 0	32 0
,, 14	18	0	,,	12	0	22 9	36 0
,, 15	21	0	,,	12	0	26 0	42 0

GIVEN AWAY.

As an advertisement for the introduction of these goods to all readers of *Short Stories*, we have decided to give away to every purchaser of the above goods, enclosing cutting from this advertisement, a very handsomely woven Hearthrug, 6 feet long and 3 feet wide, to match carpets in colours, &c.

Thousands of Repeat Orders and Unsolicited Orders received.

Temple Street, Sidmouth.
Mr. Jas. Hooke writes: "I have had one of your Brusselette Carpets before, and I must say they are very good value. Please send on above goods quickly as possible."

Hurst Wood, near Maidstone.
Mrs. Thatcher writes: "Sir, please to send me two Carpets and two Rugs. I had two from you three years ago, and they have given great satisfaction."

All goods despatched same day as order received. SATISFACTION GUARANTEED OR MONEY RETURNED. Cheques and Postal Orders to be made payable to J. HARGREAVES, *Sec.*, and crossed "Union Bank." Established upwards of Twenty-five Years. *Address*—

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PAY YOU WELL.

"STRONGEST AND BEST."—*Health.*

FRY'S
Pure Concentrated
COCOA

Highest Honours, Chicago, 1893. | Over 100 Prize Medals and Diplomas.

Purchasers should ask specially for FRY'S PURE CONCENTRATED COCOA *to distinguish it from other varieties manufactured by the Firm.*

"THE NIMBLE 9D."

Great Reduction in price to 9d. per lb. in order to reduce stock, but

QUALITY GOOD AS EVER.

NEARLY 100,000 BEDS ALREADY SOLD

TO THOROUGHLY SATISFIED PURCHASERS.

NEWHAM'S LINCOLNSHIRE FEATHER BEDS

THESE BEDS are warranted doubly purified, dusted, and perfected in our own extensive factory at Boston, Lincs., made in strong linen bordered tick. The quality, sweetness, and purity of every bed guaranteed. These beds ALWAYS GIVE SATISFACTION, and many thousands of purchasers have sent us flattering testimonials and other orders for beds. Note following prices, *which are 25 per cent. less than our recently advertised prices.*

No. 1—Single Bed, Bolster and Pillow, 6ft. 3in. by 3ft. 6in., weighing 40lbs. **30/-**

No. 2—Double Bed, Bolster, and Two Pillows, 6ft. 6in. by 4ft 6in., weighing 50lbs. **37/6**

No. 3—Double Bed, Bolster, and Two Pillows, 6ft. 6in. by 4ft. 6in., weighing 55lbs. **41/3**

No. 4—Extra Size Bed, Bolster, and Two Pillows, 6ft. 6in. by 5ft., weighing 65lbs. **48/9**

Any sized Bed only 9d. per lb., *Carriage Paid*, to any station in the United Kingdom. FEATHERS ONLY 9d. PER LB. The trade supplied. All orders must be accompanied by cheque or P.O.O. (which, as security to purchasers, may be post-dated ten days). Send for samples of Feathers and Ticks, Price Lists, etc., which will be sent *Post Free* and need not be returned. A great reduction on three or more Beds. *Please mention this paper.*

S. S. NEWHAM & CO., Boston, Lincolnshire.

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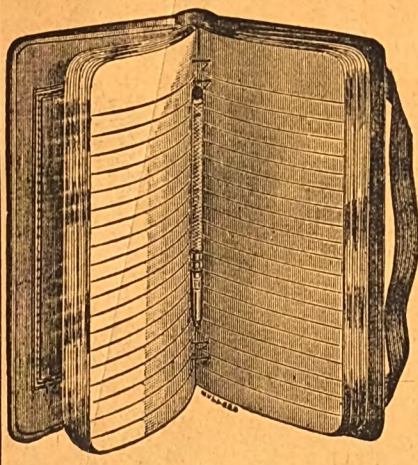
"AYE, READY!" NOTE-BOOK.

WITH PATENT "SELF-REGISTER."



THE HANDIEST AND THE BEST. THE SIMPLEST AND THE CHEAPEST.

As will be seen from the Illustration, this Note-Book has a hollow "rest" cut into the back, into which the Pencil falls and is securely held, while by means of an ingenious contrivance called a "Self-Register," the person using the Book can at once open it where he was last writing. A reference to any page in the front, the middle, or the end is also materially assisted by the "Self-Register."

In Leather Bindings, Round Corners, Gilt Edges, from 1s. upwards, or with Re-fills from 3s. 6d. to 10s. 6d.

WM. COLLINS, SONS & CO., LIMITED,
Bridewell Place, London, E.C.;
139, Stirling Road, Glasgow.

MRS. JACKSON

An artist's wife, residing at Norton, near Malton, states: "I am deeply grateful to you for the good received through taking your Wind Pills. I suffered severely from

INDIGESTION, SPASMS,

and **LIVER COMPLAINT**. The doctors gave me up as incurable, nor did I think it possible for me to recover. I scarcely dared to eat any food, fearing suffocation. Seeing an advertisement of

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I resolved to try them. After taking a few small boxes I lost all the painful symptoms, and now enjoy good health. Publish my statement as you please."

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☛ The Wind Pills being purely Vegetable, Tasteless, and Mild, and Tonic in their action, may be taken with perfect safety by the most delicate of either sex.

Of all Medicine Vendors, at **1s. 1½d.** and **2s. 9d.** Post Free for P.O. or Stamps from

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PEARSON'S
£100
COUPON.
No. 1
JAN. 4, 1896.
S.S. S.S.

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Feb. 1... 6 " "
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Total for 12 months ...£92 per cent.

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IF interested in how a LEGITIMATE investment, WITHOUT SPECULATION, can be made to yield this return, write for our Illustrated Manual, post free. We have not a dissatisfied client, no money has ever been lost, and £5 and upwards may be invested. Cheques for profits mailed promptly 1st of each month. DOUGLAS, HUNGERFORD & WILLIAMS, 5, Copthall Buildings, Copthall Avenue, E.C., London, and 11, Place de la Bourse, 11, Paris.

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Permanently cured. A Pamphlet giving sound practical advice and particulars of a successful treatment for a rapid, simple, and inexpensive home-cure, forwarded free to all upon receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—Prof. B. L. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

HAIR DESTROYED

permanently and absolutely by an entirely new and harmless self-treatment, total destruction guaranteed. Particulars free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. Prof. F.T. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

TOO STOUT

Dr. Grey's **FAT REDUCING** Pills.

A safe, rapid, and permanent reduction and improvement in health and **breathing** guaranteed. A special preparation kept for stubborn cases (either sex) which have resisted other treatment.

ABDOMINAL OBESITY A SPECIALTY.

2/9 and 4/6 per box, plain wrapper, post free to all parts. Dr. O. GREY, 57, Weymouth St., Portland Pl., London, W.

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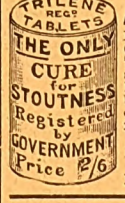
Prevents Decay. Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented.

Neuralgic Headache and all Nerve Pains Removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.



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Readily **Reduce Weight** and **Cure Corpulency Permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to PRESERVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of diet. **Reduction begins immediately.**

An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*" Send **2/6** to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, **Pinsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**

VIOLIN STRINGS.

4 Best "E's" (samples) 9d., post free.

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DEAFNESS, HEAD NOISES, etc., ABSOLUTELY CURED in 24 hours, by using one bottle of "Auraline Essence," the Great Indian Discovery. Millions of sufferers cured after all else had failed. Many testimonials. Why remain deaf when a cure awaits you? Send 2/9 to the MACKAY REMEDY CO., 104, High Holborn, London.

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A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs. "T. D.," 87, Strand, London.

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY

C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 366.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending January 4th, 1896.

HER MILLINER'S BILL.

IF ever a man ought to have married money it was Charlie Lorrimer. Brought up in good style, the death of his father just before he, Charlie, came of age, revealed to him the unpleasant fact that instead of being in receipt of a good income, all that he had coming to him was a few hundreds a year; quite enough, of course, for many men to enjoy life comfortably upon, but not so to one who had been accustomed to have his every whim gratified without considering the cost.

Through influence, a post under Government was in due course obtained for him, and if he had been content to remain single, as hundreds of other young men similarly situated would have done, he could have been exceedingly comfortable, seeing that he had the *entrée* of some of the best society in town.

He was an extremely good-looking young man, of undeniably pleasing manners; still, girls are more sensible, or more mercenary, whichever you like to call it, nowadays than they were formerly, and do not give their mothers and chaperons so much trouble in the way of forming undesirable attachments as they used to, I fancy.

Hence it came about that as Charlie Lorrimer had the good sense not to pay marked attention to any young lady individually in the particular set in which he moved, he was regarded as harmless enough. It is true there had been something between him and a certain Miss Diana Carew, a lady several years his senior, the daughter of a rich foxhunting baronet whose property adjoined the Lorrimer's.

She was a lady who, if report spoke truly, was not only one of the best horsewomen in the county (a fact which was universally admitted on all sides), but just a wee bit fast as well; preferring to make her bets in coin of the realm rather than orthodox boxes of gloves, and not disdaining to take a hand at a card party where the smallness of the stakes was *not* a prominent feature.

Whether there had ever been more than a flirtation between them, or whether he or she were to blame, is a matter of uncertainty.

At any rate, before Charlie Lorrimer's bad luck came upon him, a coolness had sprung up between them, and Society was startled one day by the

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announcement that Miss Carew was engaged to Lord Duncombe, a middle-aged peer who did not enjoy the best of reputations.

In course of time they were duly married: the alliance, as people had predicted, proving anything but a happy one for the lady, her spouse speedily dissipating her ample fortune, and finally, finding England too hot for him, betaking himself somewhere abroad.

Possibly it was from being unsuccessful in his first effort that made people set Mr. Lorrimer down as a confirmed bachelor, but to everybody's surprise he quietly announced one day, when he had just entered his twenty-eighth year, and ought to have known better, as his friends said, that he was going to get married; and, what was in their eyes still more discreditable, to a girl without a penny—a clergyman's daughter from a remote parish down in the west of England.

His friends could not help admiring his choice, a handsome specimen of English girlhood; but so for the matter of that was Miss Bungleigh, the rich brewer's daughter, who had unmistakably set her cap at him, and would have jumped at the chance of marrying him, and brought him a fortune into the bargain.

In due course the wedding came off, very quietly, down in Devonshire, and the happy couple, after the usual Continental honeymoon, set up housekeeping in a very pretty flat in West Kensington.

For a time all went well; he was not continually going to his club, and she, charmed with the novelty of life in London, after the dull quiet of the country, was perfectly happy and contented; but after a while the desire seized her to extend their somewhat small circle of acquaintances, and she began to rally her husband on not taking her about more, and introducing her into the set in which he had moved before they were married.

At the same time she had by degrees developed a somewhat expensive taste in the matter of dress, and her milliner's bills had more than once given her husband a severe shock, and he had hinted as much to her on one or two occasions.

Things had been going on in this way for upwards of a twelvemonth, and a certain amount of estrangement had grown up between them. The sweet girlish maiden became somewhat snappy at times, and he in consequence had recourse to the pleasures of his club more regularly than she altogether approved of.

One day things came to a climax; the dinner had not been quite what it should be. Mrs. Lorrimer did not, as a rule, keep her servants very long, and cook was under notice to leave, so that when the trim parlour-maid had brought in the coffee, the storm broke.

"I was looking for some stationery in your escritoire this morning, Charles, and I came across some letters signed Diana Carew. You never mentioned her name to me, I think."

"Didn't I, dear? Oh, she was an old flame of mine; used to live next to our place in Loamshire; a very jolly girl she was, too."

"And what became of her, may I ask?"

"Got married."

"To whom?"

"Oh, a fellow who was no good, Lord Duncombe; ran through her money in no time, and then bolted."

"I wonder you never thought it worth while to mention her name to me, Charles."

"Oh, it was all over years before I knew you. I quite forgot I had any of her letters still by me; they were all very matter-of-fact, if I remember right," he went on in as airy a tone of voice as he could command.

"I see she used to address you as 'Dear Charlie,' so you must have been pretty intimate?"

"Oh, that's nothing; we were brought up together, you know—oh, by the way, Hilda, I have an invitation for a hop at the Laces' next week."

"I am glad to see that some of your old friends are beginning to recognise my existence, and that reminds me, Charlie, I want some money. I have ordered a new dress at Madame Elysée's, and I want to pay her account. She does charge awfully."

"All right, my dear, you can have a tenner," said Charlie, thankful at the turn the conversation had taken.

"If you mean ten pounds, Charles, all I have to say is that that will be no good at all; this dress I have just ordered will be £10 10s. at least, and I fancy my account must already be nearer £60 than £50; you don't want me to go about like an old frump, I suppose?"

Her husband lit a cigarette before replying. "I am afraid £15 is the very most I can spare you—you see, my dear, we are living in a rather more expensive style than my income justifies, and £70 for dress."

"I beg your pardon, I said about £60."

"Yes, and then this new one which is going to cost £10 10s., you say?"

"Oh, she can wait for that."

"Yes, but it must be paid sometime, I suppose; I have meant to speak to you about your dress expenditure for some time. Your mother told me before we were married that if I allowed you £30 a year I should be doing——"

"Oh, mamma doesn't know what things cost in London; it is for your sake more than my own I dress well. You always say how necessary it is to study appearances."

"Well, it is no use arguing about it; all the money I have at my disposal until the end of the quarter is less than £50, and I cannot possible spare you more than £15."

"I wonder what your cigar bill comes to in the year?"

"I can easily tell you; for months past I have almost always smoked a pipe."

After a few more controversial remarks the lady retired with as much dignity as she could command.

"I wonder," thought Mr. Lorrimer to himself, "whether there was anything very compromising in those letters. Poor Di, she was a good sort. It is not quite the thing to do to dun a lady for a debt, but I know she would have paid up long ago if she had ever thought of it. It's lucky Hilda did not see it, though. Perhaps she did, and did not understand what it meant."

A minute later Mr. Lorrimer had opened the drawer from which his wife had a few hours ago unearthed the bundle of letters from Miss Carew.

"Ah! here it is," as he picked up an envelope in which was contained a half-sheet of note-paper bearing the words in a bold handwriting, "I.O.U. £100, Diana Carew, July 3rd., 1887."

"Now, what's to be done? If I drop her a line she will reply by return, but Hilda would know the writing at a glance, and that would never do. If I go and call, some good-natured friend would be sure to tell Hilda, which would be worse still. Hold on. Yes—the very thing—I'll do it, too."

The subject of finance was not again referred to between them that evening, but the following afternoon, on his return from the F.O, Mr. Lorrimer saw unmistakable signs of a storm brewing on his wife's face, and

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was not long in being enlightened as to the cause of her displeasure.

"I went about that new dress to-day, and the way in which people go on in London is really quite incomprehensible. Having been brought up in the country, my education in certain social matters may have been neglected, but I certainly should not expect a gentleman holding any sort of position in the country to take off his hat to a milliner, and in her own shop, too."

"And do they in London?"

"Why, the men who go to this Madame Elysée's not only take off their hats to her, but her customers chat away to her as if they were on grounds of perfect equality."

"And she isn't a particularly pretty woman either."

"Pretty, indeed—as if that ought to make any difference—why, she is as ugly as sin, and will never see forty again."

"Are you quite sure? She is a very quiet, unassuming woman."

"Oh, you know her, then?"

"And if her customers like to make themselves agreeable to her," he continued, ignoring her question, "from what you tell me of the class of people you see there, it is, you may depend upon it, the correct thing to do, and you'd better do the same. I have told you how my account stands at my bankers; you had better be civil to her until you can afford to be independent, I think."

"I shall most certainly give her a piece of my mind if she attempts any familiarities with me."

"You must please yourself, my dear."

"I mean to," was the reply.

The opportunity was not long in coming. On Mrs. Lorrimer's next visit to the Bond Street emporium she found the proprietress engaged in affable conversation with a well-known M.P. and his wife.

An assistant came forward to attend to her, and before she had concluded the mysterious operation of "fitting," Madame had taken leave of her friends, the gentleman courteously taking off his hat as he wished her good-bye, and she came forward to Mrs. Lorrimer to express a hope that everything was satisfactory.

"As satisfactory as can be expected, I suppose."

"I don't understand you, madam. I am very sorry if you have any cause for complaint."

"I had been recommended to you as a person who gave individual attention to her customers, instead of which I find myself invariably waited upon by one or other of your assistants."

"I cannot possibly be everywhere, madam, and all my helpers are thoroughly qualified to execute orders and attend to customers, even more so than I am, probably."

This was said in a quiet, ladylike tone of voice, although the speaker, a plain, middle-aged woman, looked as if she could on occasion bandy sharp words with anybody.

"When I come to a shop, I expect to be attended to by the principal."

"Very well then, madam, it will be best for us to sever our connection; I will send in my account shortly."

"Send it in at once by all means."

Mr. Lorrimer was agreeably surprised when he next saw his wife to find her in a very good temper.

"I told you I should give that milliner woman a bit of my mind."

"And you have?"

"Yes, I have; I told her to send her account in as soon as she liked."

"And if she takes you at your word?"

"You will have to pay it."

"I have told you I can't, that is, not at present; I might in one way, though," speaking as if he had suddenly remembered something.

"I don't care how you do it as long as she is paid. What do you mean to do, borrow it?"

"No; in going through some papers in that drawer in which you you found Miss Carew's letters, I came across an I.O.U. for £100, and of course I could get that by asking for it."

"A hundred pounds owing to you and you complain of being short of money? Really, Charlie, you are altogether incomprehensible."

"You see, my dear, this money is owing to me by a lady."

"I don't see that matters much. Not a lady of rank, I suppose?"

"She is, as it happens."

"Oh! isn't it rather a strange thing for ladies to incur debts to gentlemen?"

"I thought you might think so, but then this isn't exactly a debt."

"What on earth is it, then?"

"A sum I won at cards some years ago now, and I imagine the fact must have escaped the lady's memory, otherwise I am sure she would have sent me a cheque long since."

"All the more reason you should remind her. I would do anything rather than be under an obligation to that Bond Street woman."

"If I get this money to-morrow I will send you a wire, and you can meet me at Madame Elysée's."

"Do you mean to call for it? If so I think you might take me. Women are so much more tactful in these matters than men."

"On second thoughts, I will meet you in Bond Street to-morrow at four o'clock; I am quite sure to get the money, and I can settle by cheque afterwards."

* * * * *

Punctual to the appointed time saw Mr. Lorrimer in Bond Street, and after waiting something like half-an-hour he saw his wife's brougham (hired) coming along.

Mrs. Lorrimer's look of triumph gave way to one of genuine consternation when on entering the shop she saw her husband courteously take off his hat to Madame Elysée, and express himself pleased at seeing her looking so well. "My wife tells me she wants her account if you have it ready, please."

"Here it is, Mr. Lorrimer. I hope you won't think me awfully extortionate," replied Madame with a laugh.

"Just glance over it, dear, will you?" handing it to his wife, and turning to the proprietress he resumed his conversation. Presently she was called away, and Mr. Lorrimer asked his wife casually if it was correct.

"The—the items seem all right, but what does this mean, Charlie? Total £73 15s.; less due to Mr. Lorrimer on his I.O.U., £100; balance in his favour, £26 5s.

"That's the I.O.U. I spoke to you about."

"But you said your debtor was a lady of rank."

"And so she is! Madame Elysée to the world at large. Lady Duncombe to her friends. You see, when Duncombe left her she had to do something; lots of titled people are in business nowadays, and——"

"Charles, you will oblige me by calling the brougham at once!"

"Certainly, my dear, but I must just say good-bye to Lady Duncombe first."

S. J. F. NEWBERY.

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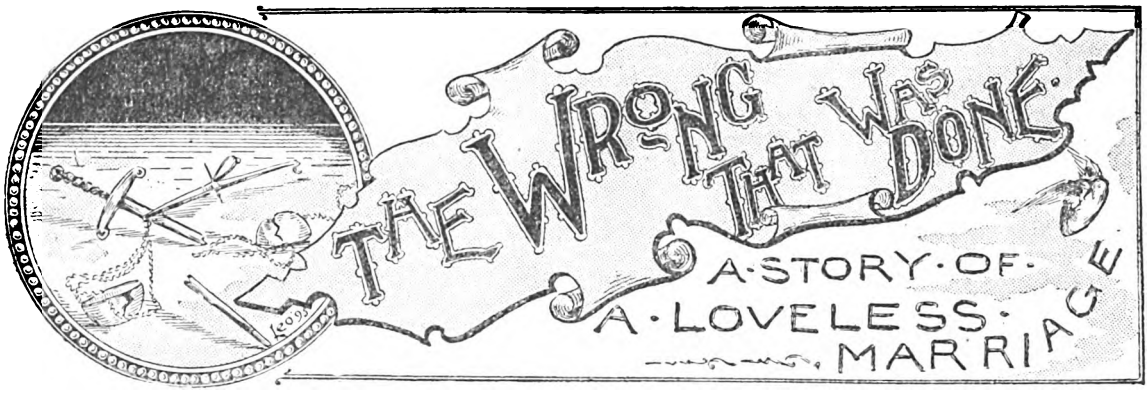

By E. C. WAGGENER.

SUMMARY.

COLONEL BEVERLY and his step-daughter, Helen, between whom there is little love, are living together at Looe. After a long absence, Helen's sister, Kitty, returns home. She discovers that Helen fancies herself deeply in love with Gifford Vane, to whom she herself was engaged five years ago, but has not seen him since.

CHAPTER IV.

"I NEED a few more roses for this vase," remarked Helen in a critical tone, as she drew back to inspect the work of her busy hands. "Gifford," turning to the young man who sat watching her with an amused look in his handsome eyes, "I wish you'd run down to the garden and gather some. Kitty will go with you and help you. I must watch the jelly, or I'd go myself."

She stood by a tall, old-fashioned dresser, on which was heaped a quantity of delicious-looking cakes, and a bowl of freshly gathered strawberries occupying the centre.

"Of course we'll go," said the young man, jumping up with alacrity. "What an energetic little body you are," he added, reaching over and boldly appropriating a handful of berries.

"Kitty, do coax him away before he eats the last berry. And see how he is eyeing those cakes. I feel sure he is only waiting for a chance to steal one."

"Yes, do take me away, Miss North, or you'll have neither cakes nor strawberries for tea."

"I really feel too comfortable to move," said Kitty, from the depths of an easy-chair by the window. "And Helen makes such a charming picture with those stains on her hands, and that frown on her forehead, that I am tempted to stay and listen to the lecture I feel sure she means to give you."

"I'll defer the lecture until you come back," said Helen as she hunted about the room for an empty basket. "Now do run along, there's a dear," she added coaxingly.

"I'll go if you'll come too, presently," said Kitty sweetly, as she rose, with a pretty, reluctant air, and wound a light, fleecy scarf about her shoulders.

"I'll come directly, if I don't find something else to do."

Once out of the house an awkward silence fell between Kitty and her companion, which neither seemed disposed to break. The young man strode along, his eyes bent on the ground, except when he occasionally raised them to dart a strange, puzzled look at the graceful, erect figure at his side.

When they reached the garden gate, over which an oak tree spread its foliage, completely shutting off a view of the house, he stopped abruptly, and, seizing her hand, looked long and searchingly into her eyes.

"Kitty, what does this mean?" he demanded in a low, angry voice. "One would think we had never met before until to-day. What do you mean by treating me in this manner?"

"You forget yourself, Dr. Vane," began Kitty haughtily.

"Dr. Vane!" he interrupted, with a sneer. "Once you were not quite so formal. Is it possible that you mean to ignore the past?"

"I shall at least try to forget it—as *you* have done," she answered, looking straight into his handsome eyes.

"I'm sure I have no wish to forget it," he retorted flushing hotly under her steady gaze. "I don't know," he went on, with a sweeping gesture towards the house, "what prevented me from letting them know the truth, unless it was the quick, warning look you gave me, and even then I wasn't certain of your meaning. Kitty, tell me, why are you treating me in this cruel manner?"

"Have I been lacking in courtesy towards you?" she asked, a quiver of excitement in her voice.

"No; but you met me as you would have met any stranger, and I can't understand such treatment."

"It would have been very awkward to have met you in any other way. Knowing you to be Helen's accepted lover, I preferred that we should meet as strangers rather than that we should have to enter into explanations."

"Nonsense! I'm nobody's lover but yours, sweetheart, and you know it," he interrupted laughing, and yet with a puzzled look on his face.

"I am in no mood for sentimental nonsense," she said, frowning and trying to withdraw her hand from his. But he only held it the closer, while the ominous look in his eyes meant that he would have no further trifling.

"I'm not going to ask you to explain why you treated me as you did five years ago," he said. "What I want to know just now is what you meant by calling me your sister's accepted lover?"

"You expect to marry her," began Kitty hesitatingly.

"Who put that idea into your head?" he asked quickly.

"Colonel Beverly gave me the information—not as an idea, either, but as a settled fact."

"Then he lied," said Gifford with more force than elegance. "Your sister and I are good friends—nothing more. I'd like to know what object your stepfather had in telling such a falsehood," he added resentfully.

Kitty said nothing, but looked searchingly into his face, which was certainly open and honest enough to have dispelled her worst suspicions. It wore a perplexed, angry look, but had not the least appearance of guilt.

"And you believed him?" he said at last reproachfully. "Here," and he drew her to a bench near the gate, "sit down, and let me give you an account of myself. Perhaps we will be able to come to a better understanding then. When we parted that day five years ago—and what a wretched day it was to us both—I little thought when and in what manner we would meet again. You know I didn't expect to be absent longer than a fortnight, but my business detained me nearly a month. During that time I heard nothing from you, though I wrote to you every week.

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And when I did return I learnt to my grief and astonishment, that you had left town the previous week, to take charge of a school somewhere.

"I questioned your aunt about you, but she refused to give me your address or any information concerning you. Your friends were equally as reticent on the subject when I appealed to them, the majority of them protesting that they were in perfect ignorance of your whereabouts. So you can easily guess how your conduct annoyed and puzzled me.

"True, we had had a slight quarrel just before I was summoned from town; but that matter had been straightened up, and we had parted with the mutual understanding that your aunt's violent opposition to our marriage should not prevent it, or even delay it. After waiting in vain for several weeks for a letter from you, I packed up my belongings and left town; for the conviction was forced upon me that you were still angry with me, and had gone away with the intention of hiding from me.

"For four years I drifted aimlessly from place to place. While in Devonshire about a year ago, I met John Eastman, an old school mate, who was living in Mallingford and practising law there. He invited me to go home with him, and I accepted the invitation. One night, soon after our arrival at Mallingford, I was introduced to Colonel Beverly, and from that time on he held out many inducements for me to settle in Looe, stating that there was a good opening for a doctor, as the only physician in the place was getting too old to practise.

"Finally I consented to come, little knowing that I was going straight to your old home. Nor did I suspect the truth when I met your sister, for the Colonel introduced her simply as 'my daughter Helen,' so I was under the impression that her name was Helen Beverly. I had never heard you speak of your stepfather, nor of your sister, and had very naturally concluded that your home had always been with your aunt. It was probably a month before I found out the truth, and then through a crowd of gossiping loafers, who gave me a full history of the family."

"What did they say of *me?*" demanded Kitty, her face a little pale, and a look of angry defiance in her eyes.

"They said that you quarrelled with your stepfather because of his unwillingness to vacate the house and leave you and your sister in possession; and that, finding he meant to stay, you refused to live longer in the house with him, and announced your determination to leave. Colonel Beverly had a nephew, they said—a disreputable sort of fellow—who persisted in hanging about the place, and who refused to leave at your bidding; so the quarrels between your stepfather and yourself grew more frequent and bitter, until one day you suddenly left, saying that you meant to go and live with your aunt and earn your own living."

"Was that all?" and Kitty drew a long breath of relief. "Let us gather those roses, or Helen—"

"Not until you tell me why you went away," said Gifford planting his broad shoulders against the garden gate. "Was it because of anything your aunt said?"

"Yes."

"But what *could* she have said to have made you act in such a manner towards *me?*"

"A great many things. She declared that she had positive proof that you were only trifling with me; but when I asked for the proof she evaded my question by saying that you were addicted to all sorts of bad habits and were not a fit husband for me, and that if I persisted in encouraging you she'd turn me out of her house."

"And you believed—"

"I believed nothing until you failed to write."

"But I did write, every week."

"Then aunt must have intercepted the letters. Yet I don't see how she could have done it."

"Still, that doesn't explain your sudden flight and silence."

"I acted on the impulse of the moment in going away. When I recovered from my anger sufficiently to reason calmly, I wrote to you explaining my reasons for going, and assuring you of my perfect faith in you."

"A letter which never reached my hands," said Gifford, with a sigh. "And after that?" he asked abruptly.

"Aunt must have intercepted the letters."

"There is nothing more to tell," said Kitty evasively.

"Nothing more to tell, with four long years of silence between us!" he exclaimed reproachfully. "Surely——"

"How long you two have been getting those roses!" cried Helen, who came hurrying along the path. "Why"—with a hasty glance at the empty basket—"you haven't picked a single one!"

"It was all Dr. Vane's fault. He would persist in talking, and one can't gather roses from these scattered bushes and talk at the same time."

"But he knew I was in a great hurry for them," said Helen, in a vexed tone. "I shall never," turning to Gifford, whose face wore an embarrassed look, "send you out here into the garden for roses again. The idea of forgetting——"

"I think he was afraid of the thorns," interrupted Kitty, with an odd little laugh, as they passed through the garden gate.

CHAPTER V.

HAD Kitty been less impulsive by nature she would have taken time to consider what course would be best to pursue in the perplexing difficulties that met her on every side. But though a morbid desire to keep the past a secret, and because of a vague fear that Helen was beginning to suspect the truth, she acted upon the first thought that suggested itself, and began a system of deceit against which her finer feelings and better judgment rebelled, and of which she was secretly ashamed. Yet it seemed to her that there was no other way out of the difficulty.

But when several weeks had passed (and very miserable, unsatisfactory weeks they were) she began to look about for some reasonable excuse to go away. Anything would be better than the wretched life she was leading at present. A chance word now and then had given her an insight into her sister's nature, and she knew that a perfect demon of jealousy slept in Helen's soft, tender heart, and that it would take but a trifle to arouse it. Yes, it would be best to go away, she decided—a decision that was very humiliating to her proud spirit, when she remembered her purpose

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in coming back, and the plans she had formed with regard to her own and Helen's future.

The previous week she had chanced upon a paper setting forth the excellencies of a certain private school in Mallingford, and requesting the services of a competent lady teacher. She decided to write to the principal and ascertain something about the required duties, the salary, etc., and if the answer proved a favourable one, to make a personal application for the place.

She had chanced upon a paper.

She said nothing to Helen about her plan, but wrote her letter early one morning and went down to the little station to post it at an hour when she knew Helen was in the kitchen giving out orders for dinner.

As she climbed the hill, coming back, she saw Gifford Vane sauntering slowly up and down the long green lane as if waiting for someone. She had been careful to avoid him all these weeks, and now her heart beat wildly and fast at the thought that she must meet him face to face and endure his angry reproaches. But instead of looking sullen or fierce, he smiled as she came up, and held out a spray of delicate blossoms for her to admire.

"Where did you find them?" she asked, a little flush of pleasure on her cheeks. "Helen and I walked almost a mile through the woods, yesterday, hunting for this very flower. We used to find them in great quantities down by the brook when we were children."

"I ran across these in that little hollow just beyond the meadow," he said, as he fastened the flowers in her belt. "And I've been waiting here to speak to you and ask you not to go up to the house just yet. You see, he's asked for an interview, and I promised to see that they were not disturbed."

"*He?*" repeated Kitty. "*Who* has asked for an interview? And with whom?"

"I mean John Eastman, of course," said Gifford, laughing at her puzzled look. "He cares a great deal for Helen. Has she never told you?"

"And he is going to ask her to marry him, you mean?"

"That was his purpose in coming over here this morning. He's been on the point of proposing several times, so he says, but always lost courage at the last moment. I trust his courage won't desert him this time, for he's obliged to return to town by the ten o'clock train, and it's past nine now."

"You might have saved them both a great deal of pain and mortification," said Kitty angrily. "You know Helen will refuse him."

"How do *I* know? He's paid her a great deal of attention of late, and as she has permitted him to visit her for nearly a year I presume she has given him some hope, or he would have discontinued his visits long ago."

"If his visits have been a proof of his love and devotion to Helen, what have *yours* meant?" asked Kitty sternly, as she turned and walked slowly up and down the path. "Take care that in trying to get out of one difficulty you don't find yourself in a greater one," she added meaningly.

"I don't understand you," said Gifford in an offended tone. "John is in every way worthy of your sister, and he's very much in love with her, so why shouldn't they marry?"

"For the excellent reason that Helen cares nothing for him except as a friend."

"Oh, John's a persistent fellow, though a little slow and awkward, and if she refuses him he won't be satisfied. He'll come back again and again until she does accept him."

"You think she has half-a-dozen hearts to distribute among her admirers, do you?" said Kitty with a little scornful laugh.

Gifford flushed and bit his lip angrily.

"Kitty," he said, after a long pause, "I have tried a dozen times during the past month to see you alone, but you have persistently avoided me. And now that I have an opportunity to say what I wish I'm going to say it. No, you shall not leave me," he added, as she tried to withdraw her hand, which he had seized and was holding fast. "I am tired of this miserable farce," he went on passionately. "I want you to be your own true self again, Kitty. I can't believe that you really mean to give me up after the promise you once gave me."

"Is this what you wanted to say?" demanded Kitty coldly, as she seated herself beside him.

"Yes, and a great deal more. When I look at you, so proud, so indifferent, and so utterly unlike yourself, I wonder if you can be the same woman who once professed to care for me above all other men, and promised to be true to me always, no matter what happened."

"Have *you* been true to *me* all these years?" she asked, a little tremor in her voice.

"In thought I have, if not in deed," he answered evasively. "Surely," he added eagerly, "you won't send me away miserable because of a trifle?"

"You call it a trifle to win a woman's love and then throw it lightly away, do you? To pretend something you don't feel. To make promises you never mean to keep. For this is the way you've treated Helen."

"Kitty, you take a false view of this matter—" he began.

"I know she loves you so well that to lose you would make her the most wretched creature on earth."

"She may fancy that she cares for me, but if I were to leave Looe to-morrow she'd forget me in a little while, and marry John or some other fellow equally as deserving of her."

"You think," said Kitty scornfully, "that because it was

Wrote her letter early one morning.

easy to win her love it won't be difficult to change that love to indifference. Oh, how cruel you are!"

"You are certainly labouring under a delusion when you think your sister really loves me," returned Gifford carelessly

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—too carelessly to please his listener. "If she cares for me at all, it's only a young girl's fancy that will soon pass away and be forgotten. You cannot regret more than I do the wretched state of affairs; for, Kitty, I didn't mean to trifle with your sister. I was attracted to her because of her gentle nature, and because she was unlike any woman I had ever met before; but more, I think, when I learnt she was your sister. I hoped that by visiting her, and winning her friendship and confidence, to be able to hear from you; and though I was disappointed in that hope, I continued my visits, because she seemed lonely and unhappy, and I wanted to bring a little pleasure into her life. I never meant that the little attentions I paid her should drift into anything like tenderness or love-making. And if she has been led to believe that I love her, I am sorry."

"And, as the matter stands, do you expect me to renew my promise to you?" asked Kitty, scarcely believing him to be in earnest.

"Certainly I do. I don't deny that Helen is a good, true girl, and deserves a much better man than I am; but she's not the sort of girl to make me happy. You know that as well as I. She is too ordinary looking, and—well, in fact, she isn't at all attractive.

"Kitty," his voice growing tender again, "I love you, only you, and you know it, dear. You will be my wife—you and no other woman," he said, taking her in his arms and holding her close to his heart. "Do you think I would give you up now that I have found you again?"

"You must, for it will be right and best," she said, trying to free herself from his strong clasp; but he held her close and covered her face with passionate kisses.

"Sweetheart, nothing shall part us again," he said fondly.

For a moment she forgot everything save that they were together again, that he held her in his arms, and that life held nothing half so sweet to her as his love.

"You are never to leave me again," he whispered presently. "You are to be my wife, and very soon, too. Are you listening, love?"

"But I must do right," she said, breaking suddenly away from him. "You know," she added, lifting her tear-stained face to his, "that I couldn't marry you now."

"But why—why?" he demanded impatiently.

"Because we would both be wronging Helen. She could never be made to understand the truth; we have both deceived her so."

"You don't mean it. You can't mean it!" he cried, his face growing pale with fear.

"I do mean it," she answered firmly, though her face was ashen and her eyes wore a strange look of misery.

"I can't believe that you are in earnest," he said presently. "You are only trying me, Kitty."

"No, I'm not trying you. I am simply telling you the truth. I could never be happy as your wife, knowing that Helen was miserable. Even your love would not be strong enough to shield me from her hatred and contempt. Oh! you don't know how strongly I've been tempted to tell her the truth—how at times it has been in my heart to go to her and say: 'The man you love is my own lover.' But I am glad for her sake and mine that I have been strong enough to keep silent. And in refusing you I am only doing what is right and best."

"Right and best?" he repeated with a sneer. "Suppose I go to Helen and tell her the truth—what then?" he demanded eagerly.

"I would refuse you then, as I do now," she answered, growing more composed and firm, as he grew more excited and angry. "I am going to Mallingford in a few days," she continued, "but before I go I want you to promise me that you will never hint to Helen what has passed between us to-day, or that we ever knew each other. Will you? I have told her nothing of my plans yet, because I was afraid she'd beg me to stay. And, Gifford, I don't want you to part with me in anger. I want to feel that you are helping me to do right."

"There can be no such thing as friendship between you and me," he said fiercely. "You have been offered my love and protection; you refuse both, yet ask for my friendship. One thing is certain, you will never have the opportunity of refusing me again. Your silence all these years is inexplicable, yet I have not insisted on hearing a

Helen was giving out orders for dinner.

full explanation. You have my promise with regard to Helen. She shall never know how much I have cared for you. Yet, as surely as you live, you will repent in bitterness and in tears the step you have taken to-day."

"Don't talk like that, Gifford!" pleaded Kitty, shrinking back from the fury of his eyes as she would have shrunk from a blow from his hand. "Helen will make you a better wife than I. She is far more deserving of your love, and you will be happier with her than you could ever be with me. I feel that I am doing right in urging you to marry her, for you will learn to care for her in time—and forget me."

She came a step nearer and held out her hand. "Forgive me," lifting her pained face to his. "And say good-bye to me here. I couldn't bear to part with you before them all at—at—the house."

"I refuse to say good-bye," he said, throwing aside her hand in bitter anger. "I have only this to say now," he added, "and I trust you will always keep it in mind. Take care that your zeal for your sister's happiness does not end in sorrow and regret to you both." And, without another glance at her pale, frightened face, he turned abruptly and left her.

(To be continued.)

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His Fatal Mistake.

Translated from the French of Georges D'Espares.

GENERAL MARTEAUX was fifty years of age, and was a brave and passionate man. He was an old leader whom the Revolution had made a captain. In those stirring times they died quickly, and the frequent thinning of the military staff led him in two years to the grade of General-in-Chief.

He limped a little, having been wounded in the thigh by a ball, which could not be extracted.

His advance guard arrived on the 14th of September, at daybreak, at Forbach; and he was saluted with the fire of artillery.

"Good!" said he; "something new."

Seeing himself discovered, he masked his troops behind the pines of an abyss. Three generals came at his order, and they consulted together.

"The position is untenable," said Marteaux.

He repeated: "It is untenable—untenable," without any fresh idea coming to him. Near him the generals fidgeted at their sabres.

"Those redoubts are well guarded."

"We must beat a retreat."

"That is my advice. The reconnaissance, too, will serve us. We will return more slowly."

A representative of the people, sent as commissioner to the army by the National Convention, came up.

"They can approach these redoubts; the men are fresh; we have some artillery."

He raised his voice towards the Grenadiers:

"A victorious force drive back the nation!"

The general shrugged his shoulders.

"They cannot approach entrenchments as easily as you mount the tribune! I know my soldiers; I love them; I know what can be obtained for them. We must retire."

"There would be some danger in forcing the attack," said one.

"We should be killed to no purpose."

"What matters it, if our death is the salvation of the people?" cried the representative. "General, I am here in the name of the Republic!"

"Our muskets defend your Republic," replied Marteaux.

Already in the saddle, he would have ordered a retreat, when all at once a voice made itself heard.

"Greeting, brothers!"

A man appeared. He had a simple voice; a head such as women love—with hair in abundance, and beautiful hair, too, and with fine, clear eyes, full of thought.

"Hallo! Du Coudercq!" cried Marteaux.

The officer with an even step came to his chief.

This assistant staff-officer, who seldom spoke, had followed the general for four months. Whoever saw Marteaux also perceived du Coudercq.

All that was needed to spur the men on to face any great danger was to say in their hearing: "Du Coudercq wishes it," or "Du Coudercq thinks we shall gain the day." This man never laughed, spoke but little, never roused himself to enthusiasm, but he had the art of conquest at his fingers' ends. The troops loved him with an unreasoning love, as the besieged love the place that shelters them, the besiegers their trenches.

"Would you have believed that the representative wished us to push the attack?" growled Marteaux.

"He was right."

Marteaux gave a jerk of the head that shook his stiff hair. Under the strain of the revolt his face appeared quite white, and his eyeballs became bloodshot.

"Then you do not know the force of the allies?"

"Yes, but we must finish it; the victory drags."

Marteaux, after a moment's silence, burst out with:

"Then, tell me quickly, what? We must not lose a minute."

Fidgeting with nervous excitement from head to foot, du Coudercq closed his fists. It was thus that he always reflected.

"Divide the troops into three columns."

"Well?"

"March with the first on Shackberg, crossing the ravine of Blumenthal."

"Well?"

"Give the command of the centre column to General Freytag, who will return along the valley to direct himself on the town."

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"Well?"

"General Lequoy will turn to the left."

"Well, is that all?"

"That is all."

Marteaux, in anger, spurred his horse past his staff, and disappeared towards the soldiers.

Soon afterwards the rattle of arms was to be heard, and they were glistening among the branches.

Then the three columns entered the flames! That on the left stopped a moment under the fierce hail of the enemy's artillery, and gave way on the deep ravine of Steingrund, being obliged, in order to advance, to rejoin the centre column. The two others, at the charge, advanced on the town to enter and take it, when all at once the battalions of Kalkstein on the left, and the brigade of the Prince of Baden on the right, appeared from ambush, formed up in line diagonally, and, quick as a cannon-shot, marched against the advancing troops.

"What do you say to this, du Coudercq?"

General Marteaux had only seen the force before him, under the walls of Pirmasens; at the sight of this cross-fire a stupor riveted him to the saddle.

"We must fall back," he murmured.

But behind him, pale, du Coudercq cried:

"Force the centre!"

"We shall go to death!"

"But a retreat with the flanks harassed will mean a rout. Advance!"

Marteaux looked at his officer. His powerful head arose amid the shots that were whistling about them; it was lighted up by the terrible fire of the enemy, and he asked quietly:

"Do you see your way clearly out of this business?"

"No, general. We are in danger; the disposition of the ground and of the troops will not allow us to fall back. I have made a mistake this time, but it is too late to fly. March them on; I will wait here."

"Why?"

A sadness spread over the pale face of the officer, who replied:

"I have no longer the right to follow you."

"That is good!" said Marteaux; "this du Coudercq was always mad!"

He reined in his horse and opened his coat a little.

"Adieu, comrade!"

A musket shot carried away his head-dress.

"I have no need to salute you, then!"

Dreadful to say, he found time for a burst of laughter! Then his horse raised itself, threw its fore feet in the air, bent its legs, gave a bound amid the thunder, and made for the end of the train at a stretch gallop. There was heard afar off the finish of the burst of laughter, amid the whistling of the musket-balls; and, in disorder, the troops rushed on to follow him.

This was the last effort. Marteaux stopped his horse before the cannon. Two batteries opened fire and missed him, but the columns that discharge broke through commenced to fly.

The ravine narrowed as they converged towards Pirmasens, and it was impossible to delay the troops. Du Coudercq, with his good sense, should have seen this before. That was where his mistake lay.

Marteaux, seized with dizziness, fell with the swiftness of a bomb upon the fugitives.

"Oh! my soldiers—my children! Turn back, in the name of the Trinity! Advance for the Republic!

He turned his horse, but while he attempted to arrest their flight and resume the attack, they all broke up, and two rivers of men rushed tumultuously past him, on the right and the left, pell mell, seeming like madmen.

Then Marteaux, still facing his men, and endeavouring always to stop them, fell back, and began to call du Coudercq, shouting at the top of his voice. But all was over.

Then he remained alone on the plain, a formidable figure, in the middle of the last shells.

At that moment, at Hornback, du Coudercq, surrounded by the fugitives, had picked out four men and a sergeant. He had put his finger on their chests, and had said to them:

"Take your arms, follow me."

They were four grown men, with bearded faces, but with the hearts of children. Arrived in front of a hedge away from the troops, he made them sit on the grass and stood humbly at their feet.

"My name is Jean-François du Coudercq. I am a captain assisting the adjutants of Marteaux, General-in-Chief of the corps of the Vosges. I have done some bold actions for which the nation has rewarded me, but this morning I was guilty of a fault."

The soldiers did not reply.

"Instead of advising a retreat, I advised a continuance of the fight. I am the cause of the disaster."

The sergeant replied uneasily:

"Captain, it is not for us to listen to that. You ought to go to see the representative of the people."

"I have chosen you," said the officer, "you are my Council of War."

At one bound the four soldiers were on their feet. Two of them wept, and a third said tremblingly:

"I am going away from this."

"I am your captain!"

"Good Heavens! He wants us to kill him!"

"I do not deserve death at the enemy's hands."

Du Coudercq seized the sergeant and gave the order:

"Form in line to the right!"

This commanding voice struck the four men, who at once ranged themselves.

"Charge your muskets!"

The soldiers bent their heads, took each a cartridge to bite, then at a distance of twenty paces the officer watched them empty out the powder, prime, shut the pan, pass the musket to the left, introduce the cartridge, draw the ramrod, push it down, and ram home.

At that moment du Coudercq shouted:

"Present!"

Without reasoning, but with a film over their eyes, the soldiers took aim.

"Fire!"

A sharp report rang out, but from among the smoke, out of it, du Coudercq rushed! A burnt lock of his hair fell to the ground. Escaped from death, it seemed to him as if a hand had snatched him from an abyss. However, he still wished to die.

"It is thus that they obey me!" he cried.

He took his pistol, loaded it, and said:

"If I am not killed this time, I will kill you!"

A second time the officer gave his orders sharply, and as the soldiers reloaded, he said:

"As no representative has foreseen my crime, and there exists no law to punish me, I will invent one."

The soldiers listened. "Any commanding officer who by his fault shall bring about the destruction of the troops that the nation has committed to his charge shall be shot."

Du Coudercq said again:

"To be added to the Regulations."

Then he gave the order: "Fire!"

And he fell shot through the heart

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THE ORGAN BLOWER'S STORY

No one knows all, but I reckon I can explain more than anyone else, unless Rector Frank should speak.

You see, I have blowed the organ ever since 'twas built, and taken care of the church since the time when Mr. Frank's father was the rector. It was the summer he died that Mr. Frank was ordained. I remember that Sunday as though it were yesterday. There was the old rector trembling and white, and there was the bishop so stiff and dignified, and the rest of the clergy all a-looking at Mr. Frank, and impressing upon him the responsibilities that he must shoulder, and he so pale and grave that I could hardly believe that it was Mr. Frank at all.

When his father died, a little later, he took it hard. Then he became rector, and he always seemed to be remembering the trust resting with him. I used to wish he would cut up some of his old pranks, but as the years went on he spent more and more time in his study, and grey hairs got sprinkled in round his temples long before he was thirty.

I remember the first time I saw her, too. I was blowing the organ, and right in the middle of "Lead, Kindly Light," I almost stopped; something like a sob trembled up into the pipes, and I could just feel the pain a-throbbing into the organ. I looked round to see what had come over Merrick, and it wasn't him at all; but there she sat in Merrick's place, so little and so white, and a far-off look in her eyes, while her hands were just pressing regret into the keys.

The committee did not know anything about music, but happened to decide upon her, and after that she came every morning. She'd sit down to the organ, and after her pretty hands had fondled the keys a bit they would search out such chords of music as would seem to lift you right up beside a choir of angels. I used to close my eyes and hold my breath for fear that she would stop.

One morning Rector Frank's study door was open when she was playing, and it was never tightly closed again during her hour after that. By-and-bye he would come and stand in the door through the whole hour, and then he got so he would come up the stairs and lean against the rail. It seemed to disturb her at first, but after a little she seemed to wait for him, and a kind of hope got into her music.

Once she played an old love-tune, and then she hurried out of the church and didn't come back for nearly a week. Rector Frank came though every day and sat on the organ steps and waited, and once I saw him put his hand, tender-like, down on her little pile of music.

The morning she came back he was waiting, and he looked at her reproachfully; when I looked again he was kissing the palms of her pretty hands and she was sobbing, but her face was happy, and for weeks her playing told of love and happiness and all that, and the rector came and listened every morning.

We never had such music as then. Why, I would have blowed that old bellows all day just to listen to her playing for one minute! She seemed to love the organ, too, just as I did, and when it grew dark she would stop playing and lean her face, loving-like, down on the keys and sit there so still and so long that I used to get the fancy that her soul had just trembled out of her body and was swallowed up in the big, dark pipes.

The women-folk didn't seem to take to her, and sometimes, when they whispered, I could see her eyes get full of tears. Such pretty eyes, too; only they looked so sorry.

Rector Frank's sermons were full of tenderness and his face was happy those days. She used to sit and listen as though it was God a-preaching, and then, when he had finished, and she began to play, the pipes would fill with rapture.

"In the autumn," I heard him say to her one day, and she caught her breath and asked him if he was sure, "really sure," he wanted her. Then he kissed her hair, the same as he did his robe of office when they gave it to him to wear, and just then a beam of sunlight came through one of the stained windows and covered their heads with gold that seemed like a promise for the future.

When summer came the village filled up with town folks. One Sunday morning I was blowing the organ as usual, and listening to the piece that the organ was promising, to the tune of "Come, ye Weary," when a wrong note, covered heavily by the right one, made me look round to see who was playing. But it was she in her old place at the keys, with her face upturned to the little swing glass over her head, and in her eyes a look that I once saw in a man's who was listening to his death sentence.

I looked down at the congregation, and there, in the front pew was a man, with a surprised sneer upon his face, peering straight up into the glass.

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Rector Frank knew the stranger, and after the hymn, motioned me to ask him up.

She sat there gazing into the glass, through it all getting whiter and whiter.

When the service was ended Rector Frank brought him up to the organ, and introduced him to her as an old college chum, and then he left them and went back to his class. Old Shep, when I tied him up to be shot, had the same frightened look in his eyes as was in hers when that man sat down and said he had got something to say to her.

I had to go down into the vestry then, and when I came back he was standing up in front of her with his hat on, and I heard him say that she ought to have thought of the consequences before. He wasn't going to stand by and see his friend deceived. Then she said something about youth, and his face grew black and he said he had heard enough of that nonsense years ago. Then he sneered and picked up her little Bible and said: "That little act is about ended."

When he had gone she turned her face to the dark wall and sat still so long that I ventured to ask if she would need me again. She turned round in a dazed way, and when I repeated my question, pushed both of her hands up through her hair as if to lift a weight, and shook her head, and all the time she didn't seem to see anything.

"How long has it been?" she asked me.

I knew what she meant, and said: "Just three months, Miss."

"Isn't that a great many days?" she asked, and when I told her, she kept repeating "Ninety-one," and saying: "That's a very long time, isn't it, Walker?"

Then she began to cry, and after a minute asked me if it wasn't funny that people should cry just because they had been happy.

She looked wistfully towards Mr. Frank's study, and I told her he had gone home and taken the stranger with him.

It was an hour before she spoke again, and all that time she had been sitting staring out into the dark church. "Where do the lilies grow, Walker?" she asked. And then she wanted to know if the water was deep there, and if I thought Mr. Frank liked lilies.

As she passed the altar she laid her cheek down on the Bible-cushion—the stains her tears left there still mark it—then she hurried down the aisle so swiftly that her silk shawl fluttered out behind her—I have always thought it seemed to wave me good-bye.

Neither she nor Mr. Frank came to the church the next day. On Tuesday I was waiting for her when he came out of his study and up the organ stairs. His face was white and he stepped heavily. I told him she hadn't been there since Sunday, and he asked me to call and ask her to come early the next day. Then I saw him look tenderly down at her seat, and heard him repeating to himself:

"Poor little girl! Poor little girl! I will make it all up to her—all."

"She hadn't been home since Sunday," they told me when I called.

I couldn't sleep that night, and every time I closed my eyes I dreamt of pond-lilies. Before light the next morning I walked out of the village to the pond. The sun was just coming up when I reached the marsh. It was so quiet that you could feel it. One lonesome bird was calling to his mate, who didn't answer. Somehow the words of Mr. Frank's sermon: "And there shall be no more sorrowing," kept coming to my lips.

I shaded my eyes and looked out across the marsh. Something blue was glistening on the top of the lilies. There were only two feet of water, and I waded out to it. It was her shawl, and she lay there under it, with her little, dripping hands filled with lilies. She had gathered them and then just folded her arms and lain down on her face.

There ain't nothing more to tell. Rector Frank's hair grew white faster after that; and in his study, hanging under the crucifix, is the old love-song, and alongside of it a bunch of dried lilies; and he never talks to anybody now.

But the strangest part of my story is that sometimes during lily season, when the church is growing dark, and Rector Frank comes out of his study and up the stairs and waits there, the organ plays softly the old love-tune, and no hands are on the keys.

ADELAIDE LUND.

AN EASY WAY TO EARN ONE HUNDRED POUNDS.

AT the left hand bottom corner of the second page of the cover of SHORT STORIES will be found a coupon. This coupon will appear every week during the whole of 1896. It will also appear every week in PEARSON'S WEEKLY and THE STORY TELLER during the same period.

WHAT TO DO.

Procure as many of these coupons as you possibly can. Once you get them keep them. A good way would be to paste them on to slips of paper. A better way would be to paste them neatly into a book. However, the main thing is to get and to keep them.

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ONE HUNDRED POUNDS is a big sum to earn for, say, an hour's work a week, fifty-two hours in the year, six working days at eight and a half hours a day.

£100 FOR A WEEK'S WORK!

No coupons are to be sent to us until January 1st, 1897. Keep them safely till then. All coupons are of equal value.

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A Strange Story which Spans Eighteen Centuries.

"WOULD you like to hear a New Year's story?" he asked, rubbing his thin hands together as he stood beside me, peering through the bars of the window at the stretch of white lawn below, where here and there a young elm bent and cowed before the wind that swept round the corner of the asylum, blowing the snow before it in whirling clouds. "It isn't an orthodox story, but it has one merit—it is true." And he laughed a little as he pointed to the broad, cushioned window-seat. "Pray sit down, for it is quite long, as a story should be that goes back eighteen hundred years!"

I looked at him a moment, then sat down. He might grow violent if I refused, and, besides, there was an hour yet before my friends would come down, and we would leave to catch the 11.30 train to the city, which would end my visit to the B—— Asylum.

"Thanks; you are very kind. Don't think that I tell this story to every one. I have been here six months, and none of them know it. I should not tell it now, but I like your face, and besides, if you listen it might make my head more easy. I see you think me one of the patients." he continued with a sad smile, as he turned his sunken grey eyes on mine, "but you are mistaken. I am here solely because my friends wish to keep me from giving myself up as a murderer, as I should do were I free."

He paused for a moment, and looked out of the closely-barred window again. Not observing the rather startling effect his words produced on me, he continued in a low voice:

"He was the son of a Syrian merchant of Beirut, his mother an Italian from Palermo. We met eight years ago. I was studying medicine then in London, and my room was next to his on the top floor of an old house in Manchester Square. I have always been a lover of solitude, and at that time had an almost morbid dislike of making new acquaintances. I cared only for study, and had no intercourse with any one but the professors at the college. He also seemed unusually shy and reserved, and we would never have spoken, though lodging next each other for over a year already, had it not been for the violin.

"I had a fine old specimen of Cremona work, which my father had picked up somewhere in Italy when he was there years before. Sometimes I took it out of its case and played on it in my own poor way, so that one night its wonderful tone seemed to attract his attention, and at last proved too strong an attraction for him to resist, for he knocked timidly, asking whether he might look at it. Of course I asked him to enter, and gave him the violin. He sat down, taking it tenderly in his hands, looking at it in an awed, half-worshipping way, as if it were some holy thing.

"After drawing a few long wailing chords from it he seemed carried away by a passion of delight, and began playing. I sat against the wall, watching him. He was evidently very young, hardly more than a boy, with thick, tightly-curling hair, worn in the old Florentine aureole shape. His forehead was low, his face oval, with soft olive skin, and dark eyes that were now glowing with some mysterious, rapt light, as if he saw the angels.

"But soon I forgot my inspection of my strange caller—forgot him—myself—everything in the wonder and delight that thrilled through me as I listened. I could hear the low words of the lover to his mistress—the murmured answer dying away before half said, in sheer delight of kisses pressed on lips and drooping lids—the fast-coming breath broken by little sobs—the last close, clinging embrace as they parted.

"Then a moment's pause, and, with dilated nostrils and glittering eyes, he swept the strings again, and the sound of battle crashed through the room—the hurried tramping of the feet of on-coming columns—the sharp

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command—the last, swift, deadly charge—the clash and clang of steel—the sickening crush of maimed and severed limbs, of blades grating against the bone—the grinding together of the teeth, and the hoarse, hard-drawn breath of the dying—the shrieks and groans of the wounded—the shouts of the victors as they pressed the foe before them—the horrid tumult of useless rally, of close, deadly strife, of hopeless stand and stubborn retreat, till the vanquished break and fly for the last time, and, with merciless carnage of pursuit, the battle rolls away into the distance—ah, it was god-like!"

"From that night" (he continued after a moment's pause, while the faint glow faded from his sunken cheeks) "we were friends. I gave him the Cremona, seeing how precious it was to him, and that won his heart.

"With our common love for music as our only bond at first, our friendship grew until I cared more for him than I had ever before for any living creature, while he soon loved me with all the intensity of his Eastern nature. Yet he never told me anything of his past history, except what I have given of his parents' nationality, and I never learnt by what strange fortune he had drifted from Syria to London, and become the second violin in one of the West-end theatres.

"When I knew him better I urged him to give a public concert, and win the fame which I was sure would be his if he but stretched out his hand, for I believed, rightly, that no living violinist was his equal, either as a composer or in mastery of the instrument. But he refused, and when I persisted, begged me to press him no more. Perhaps he had already tried in Italy and failed, as many another has, in his first endeavour to win from the world recognition of his genius.

"A year after our first meeting my studies ended, and I gained my diploma, for which I had been doggedly starving so long, being poor and having to work my way. In five years more I had won a large practice, and saw before me every promise of greater success.

"I had bought a small house in Pardoe Street, where Luigi lived with me—that was a little more than two years ago. He had grown more silent and shy of others than ever, while his devotion to me increased each year. The world must have used him most harshly in the past. At the theatre he was only a part of the great orchestral machine that gave no opportunity for his genius to display itself, though he was favourably known for his remarkable technical skill; but at home, with me, he gave his fancy full freedom, while it ever grew more strange and weird until, when he touched the Cremona, either an angel or a demon seemed making it throb with unearthly music.

"Then I met them, the Signora and her daughter, being called to treat the mother for a dangerous attack of diphtheria. She recovered through my own efforts and Bianca's care; but her voice was so impaired that she could never sing again in public. Did I say that she was one of the Italian Opera Company then in the city?

"She was greatly distressed at this, her lost voice being her only source of income; but I advised her to establish herself permanently in the city as a teacher of vocal music. After some hesitation she followed my advice, and I found them a pleasant suite of rooms not far from my house, where the Signora soon had more pupils than she could teach. I was with them much, for my poor service in the Signora's illness had won the gratitude and regard of both her and Bianca, who always seemed so glad to see me, and made me so welcome that soon I even dared to hope—but I was mad and blind!

"Did I tell you of her? Tall and supple of shape, with red-gold hair, white skin, and agate eyes. I loved her, I loved her from the first moment I saw her beside her mother's bed, with long, slender fingers clasped before her, and her great eyes looking up at me in wordless appeal. Two months passed, and they grew to expect me every night, and every night found me with them, and all day I dreamt of what seemed now to me, being blind with love, was almost sure—that she would be my wife.

"I hardly thought now of Luigi. It was not until one morning in early December, when I was making ready to go to the Signora's, that I chanced to notice that his oval cheeks had grown thin, his eyes had sunken, his lips were dry and feverish, and I realised for the first time the effect upon him of my neglect, which was slowly breaking his heart. Filled with sudden remorse, I insisted on his coming with me, and would hear no refusal, even telling him to take his violin, for we would call on some friends of mine who were lovers of music. He unwillingly assented, and we went out together. They were expecting me, though the Signora seemed rather surprised at my having a companion, but she received Luigi with her usual graciousness, and her manner grew warmer when she found he was in part Italian.

"As Bianca and Luigi met, my eyes happened to be resting on her face. A faint colour flashed through her white skin, and her eyes dropped as they met his, in which shone something of the same awed wonder when he first saw the Cremona. It passed in both within a moment, but a sudden chill went through me, as if I were very cold.

"Bianca greeted me with her usual kind, affectionate manner, which now, for the first time, seemed to me as if she looked upon me more as a brother than a lover.

"The Signora noted that Luigi had brought his violin, and after a little asked me whether he played. The indefinable dread of some approaching danger, which had chilled me at first, had by this time been forgotten, and I answered with enthusiasm; whereat she begged him to open the case, and give them an opportunity to agree with me.

"He and Bianca had hardly uttered a word since our first coming. I turned to them; he was sitting near the Signora, with eyes fixed on her fingers, which were twisting and untwisting in her lap. Luigi was gazing at her from under half-closed lids, while the long lashes hid his eyes. He started as if awakening from a dream when the Signora spoke, and, somewhat to my surprise, at once complied with her request.

"I had thought that during the five years of our friendship that I had heard the best that lay in him, but now there was something in his music that had never been there before—a thrilling tenderness of tone, an almost throbbing *life*, in each note that made words uncouth and faltering. He had hardly drawn his bow across the strings a dozen times when I knew he was playing only for Bianca the most passionate love song I had ever heard.

"His eyes, fixed on her, were luminous with emotion, and slowly, as if yielding to some invisible power, she raised her own, and their eyes met. She never moved until he stopped, sitting with hands tightly clasped and lips a little parted, the colour coming and going in her face, her eyes unconsciously answering his. Suddenly, with a quick, sharp breath, the bow fell to his

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side, and he laid the Cremona, almost roughly, in its case, and rose to his feet.

"'It is late. I fear I have fatigued the Signorina. Shall we not go?'

"I looked at Bianca. She was very pale, and her eyes were almost black, so dilated were the retinæ.

"'Why did you bring him?' whispered the Signora, as we parted.

"'You mistake; it was his music, not he,' I answered lightly, though a heavy dread lay at my heart.

"Several times afterwards I went there, he always accompanying me, though I did not ask him; but, then, he did not seem to realise this, but went as if he knew she was expecting him. Ah, the agony of those few evenings! I and the Signora—I know not what I said to her, trying to keep my eyes away from them, as he either played his accursed violin or talked of music to Bianca, though in every note, in every word, his love for her was unconsciously told. And she?

"'I am grieved — ah, so grieved!—for you, dear friend,' said the Signora, one evening, taking my hand, as we sat together near the fire, while they were at the other end of the room by the piano, which she was playing, and he accompanying with that violin, their eyes hardly once withdrawn from each other's face.

"'Sorry for me!' I repeated. 'Why?'

"'Do you not see? I had hoped for you. But it is fate.'

"Luigi was bending forward at that moment, his dark hair nearly touching her own bronze gold coils, as he explained in low, liquid Tuscan, an intricate passage in the Passion music of Bach, which they were trying that evening. I stared stupidly at them without a word. Hope had lived till then; but now I saw clearly—she loved him! I pressed the Signora's brown hand silently in mine, and hurried away from the house, leaving them undisturbed. It was the last time I saw her—there, with their hair touching.

Then I stepped backwards and thrust the yataghan into its sheath.

"After that, when he asked me why I did not go with him to the Signora's I made some excuse, and let him go alone. He was now the one who was blind, and so went, without feeling the fire that burnt within me. Sometimes, as I looked at his face, now no longer pale or thin, but ever radiant with the thought of her, I could have sprung upon him, and beaten him against the stones until he was dead. But I was wise enough to avoid him, and plunged into the most severe work.

"At last came New Year's week, when I was forced, from complete exhaustion, to stay at home during the nights to get a little rest. He was always there with her until late, and so New Year's Eve I found myself sitting in the library before the fire—I intended to go to my room before he returned—sitting there staring at the coals, thinking of what I had lost through him.

"I was aroused from my bitter reverie by a quick step on the stairs. Had he returned so soon? I sprang to my feet—I would escape meeting him. But at that moment he entered the room. His hair was white with snow, his overcoat covered with it; but he shook it off, laughing, and came quickly towards me with outstretched hands.

"'I am so glad that you are here. I have great news, my brother. Wish me joy!' he said, and he laughed again, as he looked into my face with sparkling eyes. 'Are you not well? You are pale. I said that you were were working too hard. You must have care, for I shall want you next month; we are to be married then. Ah! I am so happy!' And he began taking off his overcoat, humming some air.

"I walked to the window and stared at it, but I could not see what lay outside, for the panes seemed shimmering with many colours, like the iridescent glass of the museums. I had known it was coming, and had been steeling my heart to meet it bravely; but now my strength was almost gone.

"'Yes, *mio amigo carissimo*, we are to be married in January, and I have consented to leave the orchestra. Yes, I shall write an opera, and make one more effort to win fame, for *her* sake. Listen, this is the opening bridal chorus.' And he hurriedly seized the violin, which lay on the table near him, and began playing the same air he was humming when he came in.

"I looked up at a yataghan which hung against the wall between the windows, and my fingers closed as if they were grasping its crooked handle. I could take it from its sheath without his seeing or hearing me, for he was playing softly, sitting in the armchair facing the fire. It would be a fitting time to kill him; while he was playing their wedding march. I took a few noiseless steps towards the wall, and reaching up, carefully drew the yataghan from its sheath; then came behind him, feeling the razor-like edge.

"His neck was slender, and, with one strong blow, I could strike off his head. How would it look rolling across the carpet? Would his eyes open and stare at me with a last look of horror, as those of the guillotined have sometimes done? Perhaps the Cremona would drop and break—a fitting end of the thing, to die with its master. Or the body might sit there, with the hands still holding the bow, and the violin pressed under—but then, if his head were gone, how could it be pressed under the chin? How long would the last note make the strings vibrate? Not long, for he was now playing in a minor key what seemed to be a funeral dirge. Yes, there was the sound of tears dropping on the coffin—whose coffin was it? Perhaps his; and the tears were Bianca's.

"This thought shot through my seething brain, jarring me into something like sanity.

"I stepped backwards and thrust the yataghan into its

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sheath. This was hurriedly done, for just then he turned his head and asked:

"'How do you like that? It is the funeral hymn of the Hussites as they bury the ashes of St. Jerome, which the Princess Vlatka, who has had hidden love for the martyr, has collected with her own hands, and——but in the name of the Father, how ill you look!' and he half rose from the chair.

"'Sit down, and play on. My head aches, and your music stills the pain,' I murmured, turning my face away and piling up the books on the table.

"He obeyed; but just as the dirge was rising into a strong, clear anthem of praise, as if the Hussites beheld the soul of the martyr received by a heavenly host, whose song of welcome heard far above formed the theme of the movement, a loud clanging of bells rang outside in the clear night air. He sprang to his feet, and stared out of the window with frightened eyes.

"What is that?" he asked hoarsely.

"'What is that?' he asked hoarsely.

"'It is the sound of the chimes—twelve o'clock, and the New Year is here.'

"He grew pale to the lips. 'And I had forgotten!' he murmured, and the violin bow fell from his hand to the floor.

"'You will break it if you do not look where you set your foot. What have you forgotten?' I asked coldly.

"'That it was New Year's eve—to think that our betrothal comes now!' and, heedless of my warning, he stepped backwards towards the mantel as if for support, and the bow snapped under his foot.

"He did not heed it, but stood staring before him as if he saw some horrible thing. I glanced over my shoulder at the corner where his eyes were fixed, and then at him again. His unaccountable fright had the effect of rousing me from the half stupor which had numbed me after putting back the yataghan.

"'Why not on New Year's eve? Is it not a time for happiness?' I asked bitterly.

"'You do not know! It is the curse—I feel it coming even now!' The violin which he had held in the other hand fell before his feet, while he covered his eyes. I looked down at the hated Cremona. The fall had split the back of the old instrument, and snapped two of the strings.

"'You have broken your violin!' I said, pointing to it; but he stood there motionless, while his hands trembled violently, as he pressed them over his face.

"This was indeed remarkable. At any other time such an injury to his precious Cremona would have thrown him into great grief, but now he did not seem even conscious of what he had done.

"'Luigi! What is it?—do you see anything?' I asked, shaking him by the arm. He only groaned. I drew him towards the chair, into which he sank in a nerveless heap, his hands falling by his side.

"'Don't leave me!' he implored; 'the curse has come! I thought that I might be spared, but it is here!'

"'Nothing is here, Luigi. What do you mean?' I asked, bending over him.

"'I feel a horrible fear—an unbearable remorse for some terrible deed I seem to have done! It has always been so with us; my father died a maniac from it before I was born; none of my race have lived to see the face of their first born child!' he gasped, clinging to my hand, while he brushed away the great drops of perspiration from his clammy face. 'At some time, far back in the past, one of our ancestors committed some crime—I know not what it was—which has never been forgiven by God, but will curse us for ever.'

"'Have you ever felt this before?' I asked, soothingly laying my hand on his forehead.

"'No; but all my race have died on New Year's Day, just as some great happiness came to them. She has promised to be my wife, and now the horror falls on me! Ah, why should I be cursed for a deed that was done hundreds of years ago?'

"My curiosity and wonder were now fully aroused, and I looked closely at him and felt his pulse. He was evidently labouring under intense excitement, even to the verge of hysteria or catalepsy. I hastened to a cabinet near the door, which contained my medicines. During the past year I had been greatly interested in studying the effect upon the nervous system of *lyadalia arabis*, a plant of the genus *cannabis*, found only on the western shore of the Persian Gulf, and akin to the Indian hemp, or hasheesh, and possessing similar properties, according to the usual medical opinion.

"But from certain results I had obtained by its use, I had been led to suspect that it was of greater potency as a narcotic than hasheesh, opium, or chloroform, though as yet I had used it but rarely, not satisfied that I fully understood its effects. But now, without the slightest hesitation, I took out the phial containing the tincture, and poured ten drops into half a glass of water, which I forced him to drink, believing in such a case as his it would produce a quieting effect, for his condition was distressing even to me, who had no reason to wish him well.

"But, to my chagrin, and even alarm, he grew rapidly worse, his legs and hands twitching as if with St. Vitus' dance, his eyes rolling frightfully, while a thin, white foam gathered on his purple lips, from which came sharp hisses and unintelligible words.

"Instead of acting as a narcotic, the drug had had directly the opposite effect, and had so increased his intense cerebral agitation; yes, there was great probability, I saw, of killing him, and I would be indirectly his murderer. This prospect but a short time before I would have hailed with joy, and would have watched him with silent exultation as he passed through the various stages to death. But now this result filled me with unspeakable horror, and I bent all my energies to prevent it.

"I had an unusual amount of animal magnetism and a strong will—the two requisites for a successful mesmerist. Occasionally before I had tried my powers, and knew something of their great extent. Now I exerted them to the utmost; in this horrible struggle which should conquer—life or death—I or the drug! Throwing off

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my coat, I bent over him, making a multitude of passes before his face and eyes, which, together with his hands, I rubbed incessantly all the time, willing him to sleep, until I was dripping with perspiration; my head whirled and my eye-balls burnt, so steadily had I kept them fixed on him.

"At last I conquered. The movement of the limbs gradually ceased, his eyes rolled back in their sockets, until only the white was visible between the half-closed lids, and his breath came in long, sighing respirations. He would sleep for an hour or so, and then awaken in his normal condition. I looked at the clock—it was after one. I had been working over him for more than an hour! After a moment's rest I put on my coat again, and taking the phial containing the tincture of *lyadalia* went to the cabinet. As I was replacing it I heard the words: 'Master, the camels are weary; are we almost there?' spoken in a low, distinct voice behind me.

I bent over him.

"The language was not English, but Arabic, which Luigi spoke as well as English or Italian, and during the years we had been together I had learned to understand everything he said in it, though not to speak it myself with fluency. Thus I now understood what fell upon my ears so clearly, as well as if the words had been uttered in my own tongue. I turned quickly and looked around; but the room was empty, save for the figure in the chair. Could it have been the voice of Luigi? It did not sound in the least like his. I went to him and looked closely into his face. He might be under the influence of some vision or dream produced by the drug. From his using Arabic and speaking of camels, he evidently imagined himself back in Syria, where he was born.

"Curiosity to learn how completely I controlled him mesmerically, led me to ask: 'Where are you? Tell me what you see.' After a moment's pause his lips opened a little, and in the same subdued voice came the answer, which made me start and stare at him with growing wonder:

"'The Star has stopped above us. My master and the other two urge their camels upward towards a house a little higher on the hillside, while we follow on our camels of burden. As we near the house the sound of many voices comes through the windows, whence the light streams out upon the lemon trees that grow against the wall. Beyond are shadowy low stables, whence come the trampling of hoofs and the champing of grain. Perhaps this is the place they seek, and our journey is ended, for I am weary!' and his voice sank into a whisper, then with a loud sigh died away.

"His words filled me with a great wonder—what did he see? He spoke of the Star and of the Three—was it the Star that stopped over the inn on the hillside above Bethlehem? Were the Three the wise men who had come to worship the new-born Child, and then, leaving their gifts, disappeared again into the mysterious East? Had the drug excited his imagination so powerfully that it seemed to him he was there as the servant or attendant of one of the Three? Or—was I going mad to think of such a thing?—perhaps he *had* been there at the inn within whose stall lay the Babe in swaddling clothes, there in far-off Judaea, nearly nineteen hundred years ago?

"A burning desire to learn this dread secret seized me, and, making hurried passes over his eyes and forehead to strengthen my control, I commanded him to tell me what next he saw. Slowly his lips opened, and I heard again the strange unnatural voice:

"'We halt before the door, and the Three alight, rejoicing and offering thanks. Taking the golden boxes of precious things, they go together to the stable, and enter its low door. The servants of the inn bring food for the camels and bread and wine for us, while we rest on the stone benches under the lemon trees by the wall, listening to the voices and laughter of the travellers within, who speak in many different tongues. Then, at last the Three come out from the stable, a great, awed light shining from their faces. Silently we turn down the hill-road again, leaving the light and laughter of the inn, riding on through the white-walled village below, on up the narrow rocky road that winds up the hill beyond, while the camels slip and stumble in the dim starlight.

"'Then the summit of the hill is gained, and the Three turn and gaze backwards at the Star, low above the inn across the valley, where a tiny point of light still gleams from the window under the lemon trees. They cover their faces with their mantles, sitting high up on the camels, with down-bent heads, their dusky shadows in the starlight motionless on the road, until at last my master murmurs a few words in a strange tongue, which the other two slowly repeat, and then, uncovering his face, he makes a gesture of farewell, he goes onward by another road over the hills, while they go on with their servants down into the great valley beyond.

"The Star has stopped above us."

"He rides on in silence before me, till the dim starlight fades and the sun appears—till the sun sinks in the west and the stars rise again—ever onward towards the East; on over hill, and valley, and plain, till the desert is reached, and we plunge into its shadowy depths, and toil onward through the night and day, seeing no other living thing but the crimson lizards that bask in the blazing sun; ever onward till the desert ends, and flowers and grass are again beneath us, and the wide branches of the palm above our heads.

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"'Then at last we reached Kara, the city on the shore of the still blue sea from which the sun is rising. As we near the gate a shout goes up from the solitary watcher on the walls. Another and another take it up within the city. Now great throngs press forth to greet us. Some bear carpets, which they spread before our camels' feet, and all kneel down beside the way, while my master raises his hands and blesses them. We go on into the heat of the city, through the silent multitude that bow on either side.

"'Now we reach a mighty temple, whose roof is upheld by pillars of glistening white stone, round which twine winged serpents upholding the capitals in their mouths. Before it stand many white-robed priests, who also bow before him as their master, and lead him into a chamber where I serve him with fruit and with spring-water.

"'And now — and now——'

"I had stood before him almost in a trance, in which I saw or heard nothing but the slow, strange words that came to me. But now, as his voice died away, I saw that his face was of a livid grey, his eyes were strangely sunken, and his lips purple; yet I did not heed, but repeated impatiently:

"'And now — why do you stop?'

"'Have mercy!' he murmured. 'I cannot see what is coming—a black cloud—it hides—I cannot look!' and with a hoarse gasp he stopped.

"'Look; I command you to tell me what is coming now!' I cried sternly, renewing my passes. Then, holding his palms close against mine, forcing him on, although I knew that he was near death, and unless I made every effort to free him from his trance he would die. Slowly, with each word coming in laboured gasps, his lips parted again, but apparently some part of the vision had passed during the silence, for now he began:

"'He is kneeling in the inmost hall, before the great altar where the flame ever burns. I stand behind him with the fruits and spices, and the oil for the offering. He bends before the altar, his long, white beard touching the lowest step—ah!—I am filled with hate and envy. I put my burdens on the floor, and steal towards him——'

"'Go on—do you hear?—go on!' I cried, in a frenzy of fear lest he should die before I knew.

"'Then I draw the sacrificial knife from my girdle—then——' and with a sharp, broken cry he rose to his feet—stood staring before him a moment, with eyes of horror, though already glazed by death, and then fell forward upon the rug before the fire, crushing the violin, that still lay there, into a thousand pieces."

"I draw the sacrificial knife from my girdle."

At that moment the door of the great, bare room opened, and one of the keepers entered, and with a murmured apology to me, beckoned to my companion. He rose, bowed silently, and followed the man out of the room.

"Wilson informs me that No. 23 has been telling you his story," said Doctor S——, the head physician of the asylum, a few minutes later, as, my friends having transacted their business, we were all descending to the door, where the carriage for the train was waiting.

"Yes," I murmured, drawing a long breath as we reached the cool, outer air.

"A most peculiar case," the doctor continued reflectively. He was driven mad by the loss of a dear friend, and by the death from brain fever shortly afterwards of a lady whom he was very much interested in—the daughter of a well-known singer. He gave up his practice, left the country, and was not heard of for nearly twelve months.

"Last summer his friends here received intelligence that he had been found by some wandering Englishmen in a little Arab village called Karaji, on the western shore of the Persian Gulf, as mad as a March hare!

"They brought him down to Madras, and his friends had him conveyed here. He persists that he discovered the ruins of the lost city of Kara, and even penetrated into the secret 'holy of holies' of the great temple of the sun, where he found the 'master,' as he calls him, kneeling before the altar, with a dagger in his back, and near him, lying on the altar steps, his dead friend Luigi! Both the bodies, as he touched them, crumbled into dust. A strange mania, isn't it?" he ended with a laugh.

But, as I sat in the train, I could think of only one thing: was he mad, or had it all—— And then I, too, laughed at myself.

But it was the strangest New Year story that I had ever heard.

HENRY W. VROOMAN.
ANDREW E. WATROUS.

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THE PERIL OF THE DEEP.

I.

"RIGHT AWAY," proclaimed the clear tones of the guard, and with sonorous puffs the Liverpool express drew out of Euston Station.

Occupying a solitary first-class compartment in this train was a good-looking young man, who heaved a sigh of relief as the welcome whistle announced the time of departure.

He had contravened the bye-laws of the railway company outrageously, to procure for himself the privacy of a compartment, for he was not in the mood to endure the society of fellow-travellers, and he now had the leisure to meditate on matters which had hitherto been put aside for duties of more pressing moment.

So he was fairly on his way without interruption. What a period of trouble and anxiety he had undergone since—no matter what! He consulted his "Bradshaw" and a shipping list with eager scrutiny. Could he do it? These trains, he knew, ran punctually; and indeed there were no doubt several passengers going along with him who would also accompany him across the "herring pond." Yes, there was no doubt that the last tender would not cast off from Prince's Landing Stage until the company's agents had made sure that all the London passengers were safely aboard.

Nothing could be more fortunate, as it happened.

He had been able, by the merest chance—and a reckless expenditure in cab fares—to catch the Liverpool express, and before another day broke he would be running for Queenstown on the "Atlantic Greyhound," and in six days more he would be safe and unknown under the shadow of the Stars and Stripes.

What a fool he had been! Having settled down with a comfortable conviction that his route was made out and fixed, he was able to recall the dreadful events of the day.

A vision rose before his mental gaze of a field lit up by the weird light of a blustering March morning, and a still, prone figure lying by a stile.

But how was he to know that life was so easily taken? He had not thought. Many and many a time before, at school, at college, in town and gown rows, and still later, he had struck just such blows from the shoulder—and no light blows from a thirteen-stone man—without inflicting more than temporary damage. True, he ought to have remembered that his brother Guy was slight and delicate, and that striking him thus was like hitting a torpedo-boat with a sixteen-hundred pounder. But he saw crimson at the time, and with that red glare in his eyes he could not stay his hand.

So the blow went home, and Guy, fifth Baron Steyning, fell to the ground—dead. Yes, he had no room for doubt. There had been no flutter of the heart as he bent down, in an agony of remorse that swept away all passion, by the side of that silent form.

Why had they quarrelled on that blustering March morning? He had insisted on walking across the fields to the station, instead of driving down with his traps, and Guy would walk with him. It all began in fun, simply from Guy's innate love of teasing. But then Guy should have known that there were some things that should not be joked about, especially in the chill of early morning when tempers are not of the best: above all, that he would not stand jokes about Gwen. There was the limit, and it had been overstepped. And then, when Guy had said that his title and acres would more than balance his brother's more manly pretensions, the war of words had reached a head.

Poor Guy! His joke—after all it must have been a joke—had cost him dear. He was dead. And Geoffrey, what of him? Is he to succeed to the title and to the fortune? Alas, no. He will never take the rank of Lord Steyning. He is a murderer. So far from gaining benefit from the deed he is now a miserable fugitive from justice, striving to place the broad Atlantic between himself and his crime.

II.

GEOFFREY DURANT stood leaning against the railings of Prince's Landing Stage, surrounded by the usual busy crowd of voyagers and their friends, and the loafers and sightseers who are always to be found attending on the departure of a steamer.

The tender was rapidly approaching the wooden structure to pick up its last freight of passengers and baggage.

Geoffrey scarcely noticed the scene about him. He leant with his face turned seawards, and his eyes fixed on the black hull that must be his home for a week.

Then he thought of Gwen, and what she would think of her lover turned fratricide. Poor Gwen! She had been very fond of him, and now—now it was all over and done with.

He pictured her as she would be when she received the news of his crime and flight—her tall, graceful form bowed with shame and sorrow, her queenly head lowered from its usual proud pose, and the grey eyes dimmed with grief at the sin and disgrace of her lover.

Poor Gwen! His own eyes became misty, and a something uncomfortable rose in his throat. For a moment the black hull of the *Alabama* was blotted out from his vision, and it was not without an effort that he regained his customary self-control.

Suddenly, to his dismay, he caught sight of a familiar face—Dicky Temple of the 25th Dragoons—and worse still, Dicky saw him, too.

"Why, Jeff, old man, what on earth, or—er—elsewhere, are you doing here? Absconding with the family plate, or doing an elopement with the family diamonds? Going across, eh?"

Geoffrey smiled somewhat nervously.

"No, Dicky; not exactly that. Fact is, I'm going as far as Queensland with another Johnny, who's doing the whole business, and I'm waiting for the *Scrimmager* to take me on board."

"What! Going by the *Alabama*, and only as far as ould Oireland? No, my boy; that won't do. Too thin. Say now, what's your little game?"

"Fact, 'pon my word it's the absolute truth, I'm going with—with Smith, you know."

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"Oh, ah, yes, of course, that accounts for it. Well, old man, give my love to—to Smith, you know—by the way, which of him is it?—and say I'm sorry I can't come too. And you might ask him if he knows Ananias while you are about it, eh?"

Geoffrey cast an agonised glance at the tender which was looming up alongside. Dicky noticed this look, and with unusual tact made a move.

"Well, by-bye, Jeff."

Geoffrey wrung his friend's hand with more vehemence than is customary in society, and hurried away to join the throng going on board the *Scrimmager*.

Dicky waited until the last rope was let go and the little snorting machine was fairly under way. Then he turned with a shrug of his broad shoulders.

"It's beyond me entirely," he muttered, gnawing his moustache. "Well, it's none of my business, I guess, but Jeff has fairly staggered me. What's come to him? Looks very like a mess of sorts. No, it's none of my business."

But all the same he adjourned to the telegraph office and sent a wire to Steyning Towers.

III.

MUCH to his relief Geoffrey Durant found that no one he knew was a passenger on the *Alabama*. With his six hundred and forty fellow-travellers he mixed but little, except in the ordinary amenities of the dining-saloon and the smoking-room. He had no desire to contract the intimacies which so frequently spring up in a six days' voyage, and which not seldom form the prelude of lifelong friendships.

Some of the first poignancy of his grief and remorse wore off under the healthy and briskening influence of the sharp sea air and the sense of rapid motion.

He managed to put away, as it were, for a time, his dreadful burden sufficiently to preserve an ordinary appearance before his fellow-passengers. The only noticeable feature about their taciturn, but not discourteous, companion was his habit of sleeping during the morning and pacing the deck during the night watches. Throughout the bitter cold of the March nights he would pace to and fro along the promenade deck, muffled up in cap and overcoat, and smoking cigars in what seemed like endless succession.

So time went on, and the constantly-maintained speed of the *Alabama* was rapidly bringing her within soundings. It was on a dark, clear, starlight night that Geoffrey learnt that they were approaching Sandy Hook. As is usual on the crack mail-steamers, an excellent look-out was kept.

With this careful watch, what suddenly happened was inexplicable. The *Alabama*, taking advantage of the clear, open atmosphere, was running at full speed—some eighteen knots per hour—and not a vessel was in the range of the seaman's vision, which must have extended five or six miles at the very least.

Geoffrey paused in one of his many pacings on the deck, standing near to the look-out. He heard a muffled shout from forward, and the man at his side repeated it. Then the fourth officer, perched above the wheel-house, suddenly called out to his superior:

"Do you see that light on the port-bow?"

"Yes, I see it," replied the first officer.

Geoffrey turned quickly to the point indicated, and saw the faint glimmer of a green light; then in what seemed a matter of seconds, his eyes, preternaturally quick of sight from much night promenading, saw looming up the sharply-defined outline of a three-masted schooner, apparently, as he was seaman enough to perceive, close-hauled on the port tack.

In these seconds, however, the first officer had done his best. He had ordered the helm hard-a-port, and the rattle of the steering-gear spoke to the promptness of the alteration of the course.

But collision was inevitable. The speed of the two vessels was too great and the alarm too sudden to avoid what was to come. The ghostly schooner arising, as it were, from nowhere, and disappearing into the blackness of the night, struck the mail steamer forward of the bridge, on the port-side, rebounding from the force of impact to strike another blow further along.

Geoffrey instinctively rushed to the side in time to see a red light drift astern as the last trace of the fated schooner faded out of sight.

IV.

THE *Alabama* swung round under the influence of her port-helm. In the meanwhile the first officer had stopped the engines and sent down for the captain, who quickly came on deck and superintended all subsequent actions.

So slight had been the shock of the double blows that no one at first thought that any damage had been done. The engines were set in motion again, and the steamer went to the eastward to see what had become of the schooner. But the closest scrutiny on the part of the officers, who scoured the horizon with their night-glasses, failed to detect any vessel. Stranger still, it is not known to this day what vessel it was that ran into the mail steamer.

During the fruitless search no needful precautions were neglected. It was reported to the captain that the steamer was badly holed, and that water was pouring into her through two huge gaps in the side, which, unfortunately, opened into separate compartments. The passengers were accordingly aroused, the shock of the collision not having had that effect, and the water-tight doors were closed below. One, however, leading from the coal-bunker to the stoke-hold, could not be closed, and the water poured in through this passage, sweeping with it a man who was engaged in shovelling coal, and severely injuring him. The inability to close this door was of the gravest consequences, as will be seen, for it practically opened three compartments of the ten, into which the vessel was sub-divided, to the inroad of the sea.

Day broke, and two steamers were sighted, one to the south, the other to the north of the crippled and doomed vessel. Signals of distress were made, but the flare-lights were apparently not seen, for the two strangers pursued their course.

In the meantime the vessel was settling down gradually by the head, and the end seemed to be not far off. The boats were therefore lowered and manned.

Shortly before one o'clock, more than eight and a half hours after the collision, the bows being quite under water, the stern of the *Alabama* tilted up slightly, while the escaping air made a sound like the exhaust of steam. More and more the stern rose, until the screw was right out of water, and then the once beautiful steamship glided down into the bed of the ocean. As she slowly and majestically disappeared great volumes of water were forced up over with a roar like thunder.

Then all was calm once more. The stately vessel lay

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on an even keel in twenty-two fathoms of water, as level as if she were floating in dock, with her three masts—the foremost snapped in the final plunge—standing about ten feet out of the water.

V.

NOTHING could have been kinder than the action of the crew on board the *Elda*, which had picked up the shipwrecked passengers. Each vied with the other to show the greatest consideration for the people from the sunken vessel. Every man gave up his berth to the use of the rescued ladies, and no pains were spared to make one and all as comfortable as circumstances permitted.

For eight hours Geoffrey Durant had been working hard, calming men's fears and soothing women's distress, with a disinterested kindness of which he would have scarcely believed himself capable, and the constant strain had wearied him thoroughly.

So he sought a quiet nook as quickly as possible, where he could stretch himself at full length and snatch a little slumber, a little closing of the eyes in sleep.

How long he slept he could not say. He was roused by hearing a voice that he at once recognised, speaking in the well-known mocking tone.

"Have I found thee, O mine enemy?"

He started to his feet. It was the dusk of the evening, and he shivered with cold. He had been sleeping on deck, exposed to the sea-breeze in March, and was chilled to the bone.

His brother's voice repeated the question, and there, before him in the dim, shadowy half-darkness, stood the form that had haunted him for more than a week.

"Why do you trouble me?" he muttered querulously. "Am I to have no rest? Am I to be always haunted and shadowed—even before the daylight has faded out of the sky?"

The figure stood motionless.

"I cannot get away from you, I know," continued Geoffrey, still in the same wearied, heartbroken tone. "I know that for that horrible deed I shall always have you as a companion. What are you? Are you really poor Guy's wraith, poor Guy whom I struck down with that murderous force? God knows how it happened, and he would forgive."

"He would, indeed. He does."

Geoffrey laughed mirthlessly. It had come at last. He was mad. Ha! Ha! He knew it would come. Perhaps now he would get relief from this horrible visitor.

But the horrible visitor showed no signs of going. On the contrary, it stepped up to him, and gripped his hands in a clasp, not icy-cold as he expected, but warm and instinct with life and health.

"Jeff, old boy, you are ill. Forgive me for trying to frighten you. I didn't realise till now all that had happened and what it meant."

Geoffrey showed no surprise at this strange conduct on the part of the accusing spirit. He laughed feebly. Then something seemed to give way in his head, and he fell heavily to the deck.

* * * * *

Some weeks passed. Lord Steyning removed his brother from the *Elda*. He was suffering from a severe attack of brain fever.

Guy managed to get his patient into a quiet hotel in New York, and nursed him through all the illness with unremitting attention.

Skill and loving attention gained the day, and Geoffrey at last became conscious. His first lucid interval occurred when Guy was for a moment absent, and it was from the nurse that he learnt whose hand had always been ready to minister to his wants, whose presence had always seemed to bring a sense of calm and peace.

After the first excitement of the meeting Guy was able to explain how it was he had not died.

"Now, keep perfectly quiet, my dear boy, or I won't tell you a syllable. When you sent me over like a shot rabbit—you really must be more careful how you let out in future!—I lay there, I suppose, for quite an hour. You knocked me clean out of time; then, like the conceited booby you are, you concluded that the might of your ponderous fist had done for me, and you made tracks. Jones awaited you at the station with John, and you told him you shouldn't take him with you, which was strange, as he had come away with the intention of going with you up to town.

"Then John asked if I should want to drive back, and you started and said that I had been taken ill on the road and gone home. You are not half a good sort of liar, Jeff; in fact, you're a miserable failure You aroused Jones' suspicions, and he walked back across the fields, finding me *en route* lying full length by the stile. Luckily he had your flask in his pocket, and a dose brought me to. Then we walked slowly home to the Towers without saying a word, and there I solemnly gave Jones a fiver—he's your man, so I'll debit you with that amount. He understood. He's a perfect model of discretion, is Jones.

"Luckily the lump was hidden from prying questions by my hair. In the meantime I wondered what you would do. Then came a wire from Dicky Temple, saying you were going by the *Alabama*. In a moment a divine inspiration showed me you were doing a scoot, and my fertile brain guessed the reason. What did I do? Why, that night Jones bundled my traps together and lent me a hundred pounds on note of hand only—as I couldn't get enough ready together without cashing a cheque.

"I rushed up to town, had a consultation, and, like a fool, forgetting that I could wire to you on arrival, set off on a wild goose chase from Southampton by the *Elda* to try and catch you, and tell you my skull was thicker than you imagined. What a particular kind of fool I was you may guess from that resolve. If the *Alabama* hadn't providentially gone wrong, I doubt if I should ever have seen you, because, though we started nearly at the same time, within about ten hours, you had fairly the heels of me. But you lost time on the road, so I hear, while we had a good run. Fancy catching up the *Alabama* in an old German tub!"

Guy went rattling on in this fashion, apparently not noticing Geoffrey, who in his weakness was lying still, with big tears slowly trickling down his thin face. Geoffrey could not trust himself to speak; but presently he stretched out a hand and feebly clasped his brother's.

Guy still studiously avoided seeing the other's emotion, and after returning the hand-pressure, he jumped up and said:

"Well, I mustn't jaw any more. The doctor said I mustn't see you for more than five minutes, else you wouldn't be able to go back with me in the *Umbria* to-morrow week 'tew hum,' as they say here, and Gwen."

And he left the room somewhat hastily.

G. F. BIRD.

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The Summer Girl.

"WILL you be my summer girl?" he asked, as she sat on the rail in front of him, her sailor hat aslant of her rippling locks and her pretty little feet swinging in front of her.

"Do you want me to be?" she asked.

"Do I want you to be! Yes, assuredly I want you to be."

"And what will you do for me if I am your summer girl?"

"Everything. I'll dance attendance; I'll be your slave. I will feed you with chocolates, and ice-cream, and——"

"I will be your summer girl," and she held out her little brown hand.

"Thank you; you're very kind, and I'm delighted!"

"But, tell me, what does being a summer girl consist of?"

"Why, the most delightful, unfettered companionship—nothing serious on either side—no promises—no false hopes—just a sort of mutual attention, don't you know."

"That suits me perfectly—yes, I'll be your summer girl."

And that was the way it began. No other girl came in for a particle of his attention. It was all reserved for the little airy sprite with the curly hair and freckled nose. And what a summer girl she made to be sure! How she tripped through green fields with him, picking wild flowers and singing her merry songs. How she pulled away at the oars of the little cedar boat, with her sleeves rolled up to the elbow, calling upon him to watch the rounded muscle as it swelled in her pretty arms!

But if these things were attractive, how infinitely more attractive was the easy way she fell into calling him "Harry," and the pleasant little familiarity with which she treated him! It was not a sisterly familiarity exactly, not a friendly one, and not the familiarity of one jolly good fellow for another, yet it smacked of all three, with a little touch of sentiment thrown in, and a gloss off-handedness to tone it down.

The young man was captivated, and as he looked about him at the other girls with their Parisian gowns and carefully studied smiles and glances, he fell to blessing Dame Fortune for pointing out this special one to him.

And then her name—Kitty! Could anything be more refreshing than a girl named Kitty? Especially when she was quite as frisky and graceful and as fun-loving and tricky, and as altogether entertaining as that same little puff-ball which the name implies.

"You are an ideal summer-girl," he said to her one evening in the moonlight—"absolutely ideal."

"Thank you," she returned demurely, "I am glad I suit your majesty."

"You're not glad. You don't care a bit!"

She laughed merrily.

"What does that make me out?" she asked.

"Oh! only a summer girl," he responded.

"When the summer's over, I suppose you will just pack me away in camphor, and put me on a shelf together with your other summer things. Won't you?" she went on.

"I suppose so," he returned, "you're a bit light and airy for winter, you know."

The summer girl tossed her head.

"Yes, I suppose I am," she admitted; "but, Harry, do you know——"

"Well, you little frisky puss, what is it? What do I know?"

"Nothing."

"Thank you," returned the young man calmly, "you're very frank."

"Oh! I beg your pardon! I didn't mean that. Of course you know something; but you don't know everything, I mean——"

"Ah! a compliment; but a modified one."

"Harry, all men are stupid; don't you think so?"

"Well, really, Kitty, that is a question I don't quite like to answer. I'm a man, you know."

"Yes. I know."

"Well, what is it? What do you wish to imply?"

"Don't you think men sometimes eat the paper bag and throw away the hot-house grapes?"

Unfortunately, summer days cannot go on for ever, and towards the end of August there comes a chilling breeze across the waves, which shrivels up summer things, and makes one begin to think of heavier flannels and felt hats.

The young man didn't want to think of such prosaic things, but he was obliged to. He didn't think of them altogether, though, for there was that same little airy sprite to engross him. The cool weather had taken some of the tan off, and he missed a freckle or two here and there, but she was as charming as ever. As charming as ever, did I say? More charming! A thousand times more charming, and the young man's sentiments had changed. He had passed through the chummy stage, the brotherly stage, even the cousinly stage, and he had now reached a point where all feeling of relationship ceases, and where the desire for relationship begins.

The little sprite was going home. The rolling waves would resound no longer to the music of her voice.

"Kitty, don't let it be good-bye! Don't say it's all over. I love you, Kitty. You're not only a summer girl, are you?"

"But, Harry, you only asked me to be a summer girl."

"I know, dear, but now I ask you to be something else."

The sprite sighed and shook her head.

"Too late, old fellow!" she murmured, "too late! Jack Hilton asked me to be his all-the-year-round girl, and I have consented. You've had what you asked for, Harry!"

V. N. LEEDS.

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A DANCE WITH DEATH

THERE had gathered on the deck an oddly sociable group of strangers whom the voyage had united in seeming intimacy. Their knowledge of each other had begun on the day of sailing and would probably end on the day of arrival; but, in the meantime, chance forced upon them a superficial friendship, a brief acquaintance between port and port.

It was night on the ocean, and perhaps it was the immensity of the round, uncontested province of darkness and the monotonous sound of the heavy waves that inspired the minds of the little company with a sense of mystery, and caused their thoughts to wander forth into the obscure realm of the supernatural. Some one had just told a ghost story.

"I love to have my blood run cold, don't you?" said a very young girl confidently to her neighbour; "it is so nice and creepy to listen to such things."

"Oh, they are well enough," he replied, "but nobody believes them."

"It is a thankless task telling ghost-stories," said the *raconteur* laughing; "one never gets anything but scorn and suspicion for one's pains. It is the only kind of literary effort in which imagination is forbidden. Now I cannot promise that my tale is true, but I insist that it is just as good as if it were."

"I would never tell a story of that kind unless it were true," said a pale, dark-eyed girl from the depths of manifold wraps and cushions.

The conversation drifted on, and the man returned to his silent meditation, apparently unconscious that the girl's eyes were regarding him with a longing curiosity.

"I might tell you all a story," he said suddenly, waking up from his absorption; "only I have never told it before, and I am not sure that you will find it interesting. It is true, but, like most true stories, it is only a fragment, and there are gaps in it which must be filled by guess-work."

"He is an old hand," whispered one of the party.

The very young girl declared delightfully to her boy companion that she was going to make herself believe every word of it, and all settled down to silence. The man pulled his rug up and his cap down, and, looking out upon the mighty darkness that surrounded the tossing, vibrant ship, began:

"One evening, towards the end of the London season, I was dressing for dinner in my room at the Métropole. I was somewhat hurried and preoccupied, but I soon became aware that an animated conversation was going on in the adjoining room. The words did not reach me, but there was something in the voices of the speakers that gave me an uncomfortable sense of assisting at a painful crisis.

"'Some one's having a bad time of it,' I said to myself lightly, feeling however, a kind of selfish resentment at the intrusion upon my notice of this small portion of humanity's suffering. The voices of both speakers were young, but formed an odd contrast. The woman's contralto was musical and changeful, while the man's heavy bass was an inflexible, untrained instrument.

"When he spoke, it was in short abrupt sentences. He seemed to have little to answer to her eager discourse, now gently persuasive, now in a tone of stern menace. Her voice was low, never raised in vulgar emphasis, but it was singularly expressive of her emotions. The first words that came to my ear were his, in a tone of sullen, dogged resistance:

"'But I tell you it is all over.'

"She answered very calmly and so slowly that I heard even her pretty foreign accent:

"'You do not mean that. You are a boy. All is not over with a word.'

"What came next I did not hear. She went on more rapidly, from time to time eliciting from her companion a gruff, determined phrase. After a little while the dialogue again became audible to me:

"'I wonder you are not afraid of me. You do not even dream of my power. And yet I have told you a hundred times that I am not like you; I have other senses, other knowledge. I belong to a nation that lives near to the sun. I know the secret of life; I can go and I can return. You are too daring; you had best beware.'

"'Oh, drop all that,' he said, with a slightly scornful, but not ill-natured laugh. 'It won't work with me. Upon my soul, you are a nice little thing, and I would keep you if I could; but don't you see——' and his voice sank into an argumentative strain.

"She made no answer; but I heard her say, as though speaking to herself: 'How did it happen that I should fall in love with such a stupid Englishman—blunt, dull, blind, deaf. It is inconceivable. So utterly inferior, and yet—a god.'

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"She paced the room with quick steps.

"The conversation when resumed was carried on in low tones; for a time I did not distinguish the words.

"At last the man said, with unmistakable affection:

"'Aren't you going to say good-bye to me?'

"'Of course, if you wish,' she replied. 'I forgot you do not expect to see me again.'

"As I stepped out into the hall, the door next mine opened and a young man came out. He was between twenty-one and twenty-five years of age—a tall, straight-featured Englishman. He gave a sigh of relief as he closed the door behind him.

"I had been invited to dinner, and when I arrived at my host's, the other men were already assembled. Only one came later than I, it was the handsome young Englishman I had seen in the hotel corridor. Dinner was served in a large room that opened out with bow-windows on a terrace. The night was warm and the windows were flung wide to admit the breeze from the garden. About two courses had been served, when——

"Across the terrace, lighted by the pure rays of the moon, there passed, with a gliding movement, the figure of a woman, dressed in a robe of gauze, confined about the body by a heavy, jewelled girdle. We who sat opposite the windows turned instinctively to our host for an explanation of the lovely vision, but the face of the man at the end of the table wore an expression of perplexed surprise. Before we had time for comment the figure reappeared.

"'It is Egyptia, the Eastern dancer!' exclaimed some one.

"Without, on the marble terrace, stood the graceful dancer, light as a butterfly just poised; within the brilliantly lit room was a startled, bewildered company. Some of the men had risen from their chairs, some were leaning forward on the table; our host had walked a few paces towards the window. We looked at each other questioningly, and suddenly the true nature of the vision flashed upon us. An indescribable sensation convinced us that the woman was not flesh and blood.

"A few muttered exclamations were heard, then there was absolute silence, and the eyes of all were fixed upon the garden with a painful intensity. The dancer stood still but for a minute. Bowing to the pale, attentive group within the room, she commenced to move her limbs and body with a peculiar, swaying motion, thoroughly Eastern in character. She held in one hand a champagne-glass of Venetian ware, and to drink some liquid from it seemed to be the *motif* of her dance.

"With a quick, tripping step, she whirled round and round, drinking apparently with the gayest intoxication. Her gauze skirts flew about her lithe form, the jewels at her waist and on her sandals sparkled, her arms gleamed whitely, and the quickness of her motion blew a confusion of dark hair across her face and breast. The climax of the dance was the drinking of the liquid, and, as she raised the glass to her lips, her eyes flashed at us a sudden glance, so direct and significant that several of the men caught their breath and started involuntarily.

"She threw her head back, and seemed to drain the glass of the last drop. Then, still with graceful, rhythmic movements, she went through an awful pantomime, clutching her throat and swaying to and fro as though convulsed with the death agony.

"Changing again abruptly, the dancer threw herself into a merry whirl, and, with a disdainful, mocking fling and a wave of the hand, retreated from the terrace into the shadows of the garden. A white figure was still faintly visible, and it seemed to me she beckoned. My limbs were cold and stiff, but, with a kind of clumsy plunge, I stumbled out on to the terrace and across the grass. The gleaming wraith melted away. Before my eyes all was darkness. I thought I heard the words:

'All is now over,' and through the air came swiftly a champagne-glass. It broke into a thousand pieces as it touched the ground, and the quaintly twisted stem was all that remained. I picked it up and went back to the terrace, where host and guests were all standing with the exception of one man—the young man whom I had seen in the hotel. He was still sitting by the table, leaning back in his chair, his arms hanging beside him, his terrified eyes fixed upon the window. He looked at me as I entered, and without any conscious thought or purpose, I laid in his hand the bit of glass.

"'It has gone hard with you,' said some one to him, giving him some brandy.

"We were all terribly shaken. Some lingered by the windows, some walked restlessly about the room. Gradually composure returned.

"We seated ourselves at the table, and the business of dinner recommenced, enlivened by a disjointed, nervous conversation. In about a quarter of an hour a young cousin of our host dropped in. He had just come from the Imperial Music Hall, and could think of nothing but a scene he had witnessed there.

"'Uncommonly sad,' he said, not pausing for greetings; 'by Jove, I feel all broken up. I went down to see Egyptia, you know'—at the name the eyes of all present turned quickly upon the speaker—'a pretty girl, by Jove, a dancer.'

"He poured out some wine and went on, looking at our host: 'She brought out a new dance this evening—a champagne dance—whirled around drinking the stuff with all sorts of pretty flings and turns. Set the house just wild. She danced again for the encore, and just at the end she was taken with convulsions—heart failure, the doctors said. She died. Most shocking thing. By Jove, it was sad. So sudden you know.'

"One of the guests groaned and, rising, staggered from the room. Whether the Eastern who loved him tortured him further, I do not know. He died within a few weeks. I think it was poison she drank that evening, whirling about in mock gaiety. She was dancing consciously a wild dance with Death. She had threatened that she could go and could return, and I believe she knew that after death she would be able to reappear on earth. She was conscious that she possessed the power of making the elements serve the spirit."

"And why cannot all possess that power?" murmured the dark-eyed girl, and throwing her shawls impatiently aside, she walked to the edge of the deck and gazed into the black, fathomless water.

EMILY STONE.

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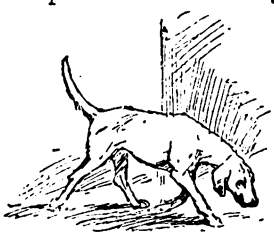
A Tale of a Dog

Translated from the French of Jean Aicard.

YES, for a long time I reposed the most blind confidence in him. We loved each other dearly. He was such a dog as you see in the illustration below. His name was Ponto.

Ponto was enamoured of a certain wooden ball about the size of a billiard ball. In a moment of weakness I had purchased this one day and brought it home. Ponto immediately siezed it, rolled it towards me, and said: "Throw that over there in the rose bushes. I will find it. You see if I don't." So said, so done. The ball was thrown, and Ponto found it. But he became rather irksome with his desire to retrieve the ball, and soon his favourite remark to me was: "Play ball."



He had a fashion of coming into my study with a brisk air, wagging his tail, with the ball in his mouth. Then, placing his forepaws upon the table, he would put the precious ball in the middle of the papers, letters, and books, and say: "There is my ball. Now toss it out of the window, and I will go and get it. That will be very much more amusing than wasting your time on all these stupid papers and books."

I would frequently feign to hurl the ball from the window, and like a flash Ponto would disappear. A few minutes would pass before Ponto would reappear with his forepaws at the window and remark: "Hi, there, you man with the papers, I don't find anything here. The ball isn't in the garden. You must have kept it."

Then he would come in at the door, go sniffing about under the furniture and in the partly opened desk drawers, and then, with the air of a man who smites his forehead and discovers something, he would look inquiringly at you and say: "I will wager that it is on the table." He was right—with his intelligent eye he had followed your glance. If you attempted then to conceal the ball, there was no end of work. He burst into extravagant gaiety, jumped after the ball, followed your least movement, and would not leave you, laughing energetically with his tail.

Ponto made me sometimes think that he was one of those men turned into dogs, of whom we read in the fairy stories. His eye was deep, tender, and human, and at times it seemed to say: "What would you? I am only a four-footed beast, but I have a human heart—a better one than that of many men. I am a beast, and I have suffered much. I suffer still, because I cannot express myself in speech and tell you, in those things that you call words, my fidelity and devotion. Yes, I am yours, and I love you like a dog. Whatever belongs to you is secure. Just let anybody touch it, and you will see."

But Ponto and I fell out one day. It was a very unfortunate affair. Only those people who, like myself, believe blindly in dogs will understand me. This is what happened. The cook had killed two chickens, and had gone into the adjoining pantry to get a basket to put the feathers in as she plucked them. When she returned to the kitchen she uttered a shriek—one of the two chickens was gone. Yet she had been absent but a few moments.

"Ah," said the cook reflectively, "evidently some beggar has passed by here and has stolen one of the chickens through the window." She looked out of the door in order to find the supposititious beggar, but there was nobody there. Then, for a moment, she thought it must be the dog, but she was at once seized with remorse. "What! Suspect Ponto? Never. *He* would not steal. Why, he would watch over a leg of mutton all day, without touching it, even when he was perishing with hunger. Besides, he is there in the kitchen, sitting on his haunches, with his eyes partly closed, and occasionally yawning. He is not thinking of chickens."

The cook was so profoundly puzzled that she summoned her master, and I came. The melancholy affair was laid before me. I looked at Ponto. Ponto was sitting there, with a studied air of indifference, apparently half asleep. I called "Ponto!" He looked towards me, and lifted his heavy eyelids.

"Did you call me, master? I was only asleep. I was dreaming—I was dreaming of my ball."

Of his ball, eh? I became at once suspicious. This was evidently a pretext. But I said:

"I think Katherine, that you are right. The dog could not have stolen the chicken. If he had stolen it, he would be engaged now in plucking it somewhere in the garden."

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"But look at him—just look at him. He has not the air of a Christian dog."

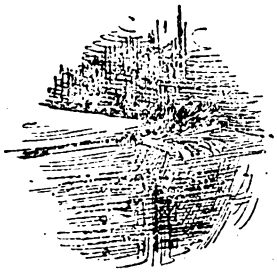
"What?"

"I say that Ponto has not an honest air."

I turned and gazed at him. "Look at me, Ponto."

Ponto looked up, but his head drooped, and he grumbled: "Do you think that I would be hanging about here if I had stolen a chicken? Why, I'd be eating it."

But this remark did not divert my suspicions. On the contrary, it confirmed them. "Katherine," said I solemnly to the cook, "it is Ponto. Alas, it is Ponto!"



What I had seen in Ponto's eyes was terrible. I vow to you, reader, that I am most serious. I had distinctly seen there *an almost human lie.*

It is rather difficult to explain my meaning. Ponto wished to assume an appearance of sincerity *in his glance,* and he did not succeed, because that is impossible, even to a man. It is said by profound philosophers that in men the power of lying is confined to speech; that the power of throwing falsehood into a glance is possessed only by women.

Ponto exhausted himself in vain efforts to lie with his eyes. But this unsuccessful falsehood was even more incriminating than an avowal.

I looked fixedly at Ponto. "Here, Ponto," said I, "take this," and I offered him the second chicken, which Katherine had just finished plucking.

Ponto looked at me reflectively. "Hum," he said, "evidently you suspect me. Why do you give me a chicken *to-day?* You never gave me a whole chicken before." He took the chicken in his mouth and immediately deposited it on the floor at my feet, and, looking up into my eyes, he said: "You must think I am a fool."

Instinctively I said to myself: "Thief! Scoundrel! You have betrayed me. You are a perfidious dog. Your honest canine existence of loyalty has now come to an end, and you have been as false as if you were only a man." But, patting him on the back, I added aloud: "Good Ponto, honest Ponto, nice Ponto."

This dissimulation was rather too deep for Ponto. Urged on by the savoury smell of the chicken, he took it between his jaws and started to go. But, before he reached the door, he turned several times, and looked at me carefully, in order to see if he could fathom my thoughts. As soon as he had left the kitchen, I closed the door and began spying upon him through the blinds of the window. He went a few paces as if intending to devour his prey, and then stopped, placed his chicken on the ground, and thought deeply for a long time.

Several times he looked at the kitchen door with his false and treacherous eye. Then, giving up all attempts to seek an explanation satisfactory to his mind, he contented himself with the fact that he had the chicken, picked it up, and departed. As he disappeared in the distance, I could see that his sometimes timid tail, which has hesitated throughout our entire conversation, had again become bold and firm. Ponto's tail said: "Bah! I have both chickens. Nobody saw me take the first one. Hurrah!"

I stealthily followed him from afar, and I surprised him in the act of hastily scratching a hole in the ground with his powerful forepaws. The chicken that I had given him was lying on the ground, and in the hole which he was digging lay the other chicken. I was heartbroken. My friend Ponto retained the instincts of his remote ancestors, the foxes and the wolves, and buried his provisions. But, alas! being a domesticated animal, and having become the companion of mankind, he had learned to lie.

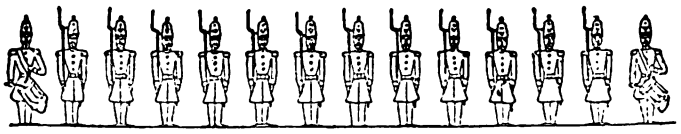
Under the eyes of the treacherous and now shame-faced Ponto, I made up a little package of the longer feathers of the two chickens, and I deposited this little feather-duster on my working-table. Whenever thereafter I was engaged at work and Ponto came to me bringing his ball, and said, with a light and easy air: "Come, come! Lay aside that rubbish and let us play at ball," I would invariably lift the little feather-duster. Then Ponto would drop his treacherous head. His tail would slink between his legs, while the ball would fall from his nerveless jaws. As he looked at me, he would say: "Is it possible that you are so ruthless, so unforgiving? Do you never pardon?"

Weeks passed, and I had not yet forgiven Ponto. But he was indefatigable in his attempts to win me over. So one morning, when he came to me again, and when I seized the little feather duster and poor Ponto was about to withdraw.

"Look, Ponto," quoth I, "look upon this for the last time. Thus perishes the only token of your fault," and I hurled the feather duster into the fire.

Ponto carefully watched the feather duster burn. Then, without any hysteric manifestations of joy, without leaps or skips, but nobly, simply, with dignity, he came and proffered his paw. The crime was forgotten. We were friends again.

Ponto was glad that he had been forgiven. But he was not nearly so glad as I was myself that I had forgiven him.



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THE STORY OF A SUCCESSFUL MAN.

I MET him yesterday. He has attained name and fame and fortune. He didn't remember me, and I'm glad he didn't. He has done some remarkable work, and he has "succeeded." Yesterday I had the chance of shaking hands with the great man.

I did not shake hands with him; the fact is, I couldn't. There are some people you can't shake hands with, you know; there are some sins impossible to forgive—some crimes so base that neither time nor repentance can ever blot them out. When I saw his photograph I said to myself: "I've seen that face somewhere;" and when I saw him it all came back to me.

It was in 186— I am not going to give you the exact year—I had shipped as an able-bodied seaman on board the—let us say—*Columbia*. The *Columbia* was a man o' war, and belonged to the Federal Navy; but there were one or two blockade-runners that still bothered us.

Among them was the notorious vessel, the *Harbinger*, and hitherto the *Harbinger* had succeeded in showing the ships of the Federal fleet a clean pair of heels. She had actually shot across our bows in a thick fog, into which she disappeared, and we fired three hurried shots at her with our great Dahlgren gun, one of which carried away her funnel.

I called her a blockade-runner just now, but we looked upon her as little better than a pirate. She began as a blockade-runner, but whenever she came across an unarmed United States vessel she sank or burned her, taking the crew prisoners, and then shoving them ashore in uncomfortable places. We knew that she was lying in hiding in one of the numerous bayous of the western coast of Florida, and it had been reported that her engines had broken down.

Of course, if we met her at sea a naval duel would take place, and either the *Columbia* or the *Harbinger* would have to go to the bottom. We knew perfectly well that Admiral Sykes, as he called himself, of the Confederate Navy, would never surrender. The reason was because at least a third of the crew consisted of deserters from the Federal army or navy, and had a price upon their heads, and, as my American shipmates put it, "had just got to be hanged."

We had searched inlet after inlet; the men were worn out with reconnoitring in boats and rowing for hours in the glaring sun, in the muddy inlets and silent bayous which were badly marked in the charts, and where the sounds could not be depended on. One-third of the crew was down with fever, and deaths occurred nearly every day. But we knew that the *Harbinger* had to be taken. If we could only find her, and if her engines were really broken down, she would fall a comparatively easy prey. Our chief fear was that she might be able to repair damages and slip out past us under cover of a thick night and recommence her depredations.

We had had three weeks of it. The night was thickish, and I was on duty on the maintop crosstree. Not a sound broke the stillness of the night. Ever and anon the light of the moon broke forth fitfully, only to disappear again between the driving clouds. There was a sort of Scotch mist which wetted one to the bone, and made me and the companion of my watch (there were a couple of us in the crosstree) actually suffer from the cold, though it was a summer night.

"Pard," said my shipmate to me, "what's that?"

We could see an indistinct something moving slowly through the mist towards the *Columbia*: we knew it was a boat of some sort by the slight phosphorescent trail it left upon the calm water. We guessed it must be a canoe, for the strokes were not synchronous. I hurried down and reported to the officer of the watch. When we had first sighted the canoe it must have been some half-mile off, and I need hardly say that it was absolutely invisible from the deck. But the officer of the watch came up into the top, and it was plain enough that the advancing object was a canoe paddled by a single man; and then he raised a rifle to his shoulder, and let fly over the man's head. He didn't mean to hit him, you know—only to frighten him.

"For goodness' sake don't shoot!" shouted the man, and he lighted a pine-knot and held it high above his head. "I've come to surrender."

The officer ordered him to come aboard and report himself. We flung him a rope, and he clambered up the side.

A "mean white" evidently. He had on a pair of old tattered trousers, black with dirt and grime and grease, and a blue canvas shirt in the same condition, almost in rags. He bore the look of a hunted man, and he seemed half starved; his face was decorated with the most tremendous pair of black eyes I ever saw in my life—the lids were half closed—and the eyes themselves were bloodshot. Somebody had evidently been knocking the fellow about; as he turned slightly, I noticed that his shirt was red with blood. The man had evidently been flogged, but, though we could all tell that at a glance, none of us pitied him.

"Well, mister," said the officer, "what are you hanging about for? Are you a spy?"

"Worse than that," said the man. "I've come to surrender, and to split on my comrades yonder. I can tell you where the *Harbinger* is, if you'll make it worth my while. I was third stoker aboard of her."

"Put him in irons," said the officer coldly, "and set a sentry over him," and he turned on his heel.

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I didn't bother myself about the deserter—was too tired and too wet; and I turned into my hammock and slept like a top. When I came on deck the next morning there was the deserter, the man who had come to us in the canoe through the fog, with a pair of handcuffs, standing on the bridge conning the ship, a quartermaster, revolver in hand, by his side. By the bright light of the morning sun the man looked, if possible, uglier than ever. Somebody had given him an old jacket, which hid the signs of the flogging; but the fellow looked thoroughly miserable and thoroughly wicked.

We were running straight for one of the innumerable bayous. Suddenly a silent order was passed round to clear for action. It was a most puzzling order; there wasn't a sail in sight; but it was carried out rapidly enough, the discipline on board the *Columbia* being good. Our heavy guns were loaded and depressed, and every man was at his place.

Suddenly the word was passed round among the men that the Confederate war steamer, *Harbinger*, was in the bayou, and that there would probably be a no-quarter fight in a few minutes.

I was a volunteer, and, though I drew Uncle Sam's pay and Uncle Sam's rations, it was not for pay I fought, but for principle, and, I suppose I must add, glory—you see, I was only two-and-twenty. I began to feel that, if there was to be a hand-to-hand fight with the *Harbinger*, it would become a historical affair like the *Shannon* and *Chesapeake* tussle; I should get to be a hero; and the hero profession was the particular business into which, at that period of my life, I most longed to go.

Presently we entered the bayou. There lay the *Harbinger*, a big pair of shears rigged over her engine-room, and a great crowd of men hauling away at something they were drawing up from it; so busy were they with the job that at first they didn't perceive our approach. That didn't last long, however; the fellows rushed to their quarters, and several of the officers hurried on to the bridge. The *Harbinger* was anchored, you know, and her furnace fires were out. As we ran within fifty yards of her stern, so as to rake her with gun after gun if needful, the bells in our engine-room ordered the engines to be reversed, and we almost ceased to move.

"If you don't surrender," shouted our commander to the Confederate captain, who stood upon the bridge, "I'll blow ye all into almighty blazes."

There were the three great Dahlgren guns; their shot would have passed right through the *Harbinger's* decks, and she certainly would have gone to the bottom five minutes afterwards.

"I guess I'll come down," said the Confederate chief. He was a brave man, but he knew that resistance was useless.

"Tell your chaps to throw down their arms and go forward," cried the old man, "or I'll sink ye at once!"

Admiral Sykes had to give the order; it wasn't a time for joking, and our boss would have carried out his threat. Slowly and sullenly the Confederate crew left their guns, and, flinging their weapons upon the deck, marched forward in a body. Then our boats were lowered, and we took the entire crew prisoners, and put a guard over them, of which I was one. I never saw such a tattered, starved, hungry-looking lot in all my life before. They were quiet enough, poor chaps, at first, till suddenly one of them espied the man who had betrayed them standing on our bridge, the quartermaster still by his side, revolver in hand; and then a great yell went up from the whole crowd of prisoners, officers and men.

They would have lynched him then and there if they could have got him. They shook their fists at him, they ground their teeth, they cursed and swore and called names; they'd have torn him into little pieces if they could only have got hold of him. And that chap had to stand by the quartermaster's side and face them. He looked dreadfully scared, and well he might. Those that cursed and swore loudest were naturally the five-and-thirty deserters that "had to be hanged."

Poor chaps! they knew who had fitted the rope round their necks. Sykes had had to surrender unconditionally, and every one of those five-and-thirty men *was* hanged, except a couple who jumped overboard and were comfortably drowned before we could manage to get the prisoners below and put the hatches on.

Judas had a certain amount of pluck—yes, it is impossible to deny his pluck. He just clenched his fists, and, though his fists were handcuffed, he stretched his arms out towards his old comrades, and gave them a fine long string of oaths. He'd a wonderful command of that sort of language, had Judas.

It was just this way. Judas had shipped as a stoker. He was an ambitious amateur; but he received high wages, which they didn't pay him; his rations were nominal and surprisingly irregular, being mostly pork and hominy; he got more kicks than ha'pence, and the morning of the day on which he deserted, Judas had had six dozen well laid on at the capstan-head. So he slipped off in the darkness in the canoe, and he betrayed his ship and his comrades—partly for money, partly for revenge.

Judas was an exceedingly clever fellow. He made out to the Admiralty people that he had shipped aboard the *Harbinger* with the intention of betraying her from the very first—from patriotic motives. Congress voted ten thousand dollars to Judas!

He took the ten thousand dollars, and he went out of the Iscariot business for good and all. He was a far-seeing man, too.

When the war came to an end (as it did soon afterwards) the patriots wanted to give him a public banquet in New York. But no, he wasn't grasping; he was contented with what he had! The authorities found out afterwards that the patriotism of Judas was all flapdoodle. He wasn't an American citizen at all, and his motives were dollars, not patriotism.

Then Judas disappeared. I met him, as I told you, the other day. We Americans are fond of hero-worship, and we generally accommodate our heroes with a pedestal of the tallest kind; but I couldn't well look upon Judas as a hero. I knew all about him before he had become famous. Things get forgotten, but I can't forget those thirty-five poor fellows, and my opinion is that Judas won't die in his bed.

J. W. WEARE.

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THE TREASURES OF THE WHITE GOD.

THE STORY OF A SHAMEFUL CRIME.

SUMMARY.

ROBERT LANE, escaped convict No. 407, *alias* Adrian Burgoyne is tracked to the World's Fair Grounds at Chicago. He is last seen, after an exciting chase by Mr. Inspector Grey and his assistant, Detective Dean, locked in a burning boat on the lake. Detective Dean finds a cipher in the convict's bed, which he sells to Mr. Richard Sheldon for £2,000. A Col. Lytle calls on Sheldon. They recall Burgoyne's history as follows: Ralph Ringold, when dying in Mexico, left a packet containing £6,000 in the hands of Burgoyne for his friend Richard Sheldon, whom he appointed guardian of his daughter Patrice's fortune. Burgoyne overheard Lytle and Sheldon arranging to appropriate the treasure, and threatened to expose them. They caused him to be convicted of a crime, and sentenced to penal servitude for life.

They then discovered, when too late, that he had with him in cipher the secret to Ralf Ringold's hidden fortune and treasures in Mexico.

The cipher is now in their possession, but Patrice Ringold has the key.

Adrian Burgoyne escapes from the burning boat. He meets with a severe accident, which disfigures him beyond identity.

Richard Sheldon visits Patrice to obtain the key to the cipher. This, however, she had dropped the day before on the cliff, with her Bible. She hastens off to find it.

CHAPTER IX.

IN DEADLY PERIL.

"HELP!"

A cry—a woman's cry—frantic, terrified, broke the drowsy stillness of the calm afternoon.

It proceeded from a point where a rocky cliff rose up sheer fifty feet from the river's banks, and, as it was repeated in frenzied accents, the single visible auditor stepped into view just at the water's edge, and peered excitedly all about him—Adrian Burgoyne.

The clay that leaves the digger's shovel an uncouth mass, that is pressed into shape by the expert moulder, that is purified by water, solidified by fire, glazed and burnished to perfection, goes through no more rigorous and transmogrifying operation than had the man who, now stepping into view, would not have shown a single vestige of his old self to the keenest gaze of his most familiar friend.

Convict 407 had been transformed. The lines, the texture of his complexion had undergone a radical change. The singed eyebrows and lashes aided the sudden alteration in the bronzed face, and new attire had enabled the refugee to stand boldly before the world and defy the law to prove that he was the same man who had met his death penned in by flames to the hold of the old barge that lay a charred wreck in five fathoms of water.

The past was dead, and he was dead. Only the magnetic eyes, with their latent fire of courage and resolution, were a reminder of the old Adrian Burgoyne. The little mirror in the police-station had shown to him a marvellous revelation. He was past identification. He resembled an inhabitant of some far tropical clime. He was a new man, in face, in manner, in all but—memory!

The trifle of money he had about him had enabled Adrian Burgoyne to supplant his singed and tattered attire with a new garb. The certainty that he was hereafter safe from the law had spurred up his drooping energies. With the conviction came new thoughts, new impulses, new resolves. He need skulk, the hunted fugitive, no longer. Rehabilitated, he could boldly penetrate the by-ways of the great cities; he could jostle the very men who had been his gaolers for years; he dared lurk near to the lairs of those human harpies who had robbed him of his good name, who owed to him the terrible debt of injustice and oppression for the health, reputation, and happiness they had so ruthlessly wrecked.

A fair young girl, clinging to a frail bush.

Mighty thoughts had surged into his newly-awakened mind that afternoon as, passing through the quaint little village of Lynde, he paused to rest near the river.

Behind him was a blighted, broken past. He had not a friend in the world. He was homeless, penniless, an outcast.

One sentiment balanced and obscured the desolate emotion of loneliness—resentment. One firm, fierce, throbbing resolve welled up in his soul like a wave of uncontrollable energy—justice! Rioting in their unholy wealth, at the acme of power and luxury, those who had wronged him, jeered at right, juggled with the law, defied the weak efforts of their victims to unmask them, should suffer in turn.

Should such things be? Should he tamely submit to all he had endured, and allow the bold rogues to trample mercilessly on human hearts and human happiness?

His brows knit, his hands clenched; there had come into the face of the dreamer a look that told of firm, devouring resolution, of patience, courage, and grim endurance, when that wild cry cut the air like a knife.

"Help!"

He had gone through troubles enough to sour every kindly impulse, but the true, ingenuous instinct of manliness, the response of a soul keen to feel another's distress, sprang into being in a flash.

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Whence came the cry? Ah! there it was again—this time a terrified, despairing wail.

"From the cliff," he murmured quickly. "Someone is in trouble or peril."

There was a beaten path leading up from the river shore, winding, and far less perpendicular than the steep incline which, strewn with great jutting boulders, marked the face of the declivity.

Up this Adrian Burgoyne sped. He reached the cliff, and gazed excitedly about him. Then, with fixed glance and startled face, he viewed a picture tragic, thrilling, yet lined with all the finer shades of the beautiful.

A fair young girl, clinging to a frail bush ten feet down the side of the declivity, hung suspended in space in a situation of infinite peril.

There was a sheer descent for nearly thirty feet, terminating at ugly, sharp-pointed rocks, and beyond them the river, at that point shoreless as to level strand, and deep.

She had evidently stumbled and fallen over the cliff, and her weak hand-clasp on the bush was evinced by the slowly slipping fingers, the half-fainting poise of her form.

A graceful figure, a bonny face. Adrian Burgoyne had dreamed of such when, in his lonely prison cell, he had reflected how the delights of home were for ever shut out from his wrecked, dreary life. And the eyes! They met his own eagerly, trustingly; they melted in pitiful pleading into the very depths of his soul. They enchained him, and with a vivid magnetism seemed to send a mysterious flash of some forgotten sentiment of the past into his agitated mind.

The practical issues of the case, moreover, brought his energetic nature into prompt play.

"Courage!" he called down over the edge of the cliff. "Hold on as long as you can. I will soon have you safe."

How? The question was a serious one. There was no time to run for a rope to near houses. As Adrian Burgoyne's eye fell upon a great gnarled oak, about which trailed and looped a thick, heavy, wild vine, he sprang to its side.

Tearing, tugging, bending, breaking the lighter filaments of the vine, with quick strokes of his keen-bladed pocket knife severing the mother-stem, he soon had a section of the vine, some twenty feet in length, ready for use.

Supple as a rope, staunch as a cable, he attached one end to a stout sapling, and lowered the other over the cliff.

It trailed across the shoulders of the imperilled girl; it hovered round her limp form.

"Catch it; it will support you," breathed Burgoyne eagerly.

"I cannot—oh! I fear!"

The girl was well-nigh fainting with terror; her nerves, weak and trembling, refused to answer to the summons of her will.

Burgoyne saw that she might at any moment relax her hold of the bush. Certain serious injury, perhaps death on the rocks below, menaced her.

"Wait!" His tones were clear and mandatory as a trumpet note.

He trusted his weight to the swaying vine. He descended slowly, cautiously. He grazed the form of the girl; he caught her in a close embrace just as her lips grew white, a spasm crossed her face, and she was about to unclench her hand and abandon hope.

His breath came hard as, for a moment, he clung with one hand, and tried to infuse courage into her timid soul.

"Cling to me, I beseech you!" he panted. "I cannot climb with one hand; the double strain may break the vine. Both arms about my neck! Hold firm—that is it! Courage! We shall soon reach the top."

Her face swept his own. He thrilled at the tender, confiding contact of her soft, white arms. Her breath crossed his flushed, eager face like a new revelation; her eyes meeting his, there flashed from the depths of his own a new life.

He caught her in a close embrace.

Pure as the touch of an angel's, her clinging embrace gave him renewed courage and hope. Dissipating the blight, the grief, the humiliation of the hideous prison, his soul, meeting her own, robbed of earthly taint, seemed to recognise an affinity, a spirituality in nature that his sorrow had obscured through the long, torturing years of penal servitude.

Slowly, with difficulty, he began the toilsome, perilous ascent. Hampered by her weight, the hard, ridged vine cutting his hands till the blood came, he gained an inch, a foot at a time in upward progress.

"Safe! Catch at that bush. Pull yourself over the edge. Ah, I knew we should reach it. Thank Heaven, you are safe!"

Her winsome eyes flooded his soul with a thrill of exquisite delight as she returned his devoted glance. She clambered to a secure place; she put forth her white, trembling hand to aid his progress over the edge.

"You have saved my life—you imperilled your own for me—my friend, my deliverer!"

"What has happened?"

A rude voice caused her to turn. At the same instant Adrian Burgoyne, peering upward, caught sight of the face of the speaker.

With a gasp full of the old horror that had haunted him so many bleak, barren years of his life, he recoiled.

Amazed, unnerved, at a sudden, an unexpected, an appalling meeting he forgot peril, surroundings, his changed personality—all, save that at the verge of a new paradise an emissary from the dominion of darkness had

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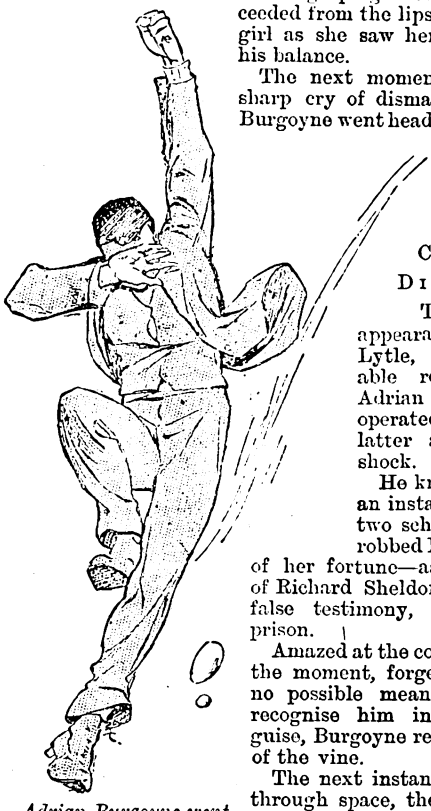
appeared to drive him back to the blight, the ruin, the disgrace of his broken past.

"That man Lytle! The fiend who sent me to prison—the man——"

A wild shriek drowned the gasping utterance. It proceeded from the lips of the rescued girl as she saw her deliverer lose his balance.

The next moment there was a sharp cry of dismay, and Adrian Burgoyne went headlong into space, down the side of the steep declivity.



Adrian Burgoyne went headlong into space.

CHAPTER X.

DISAPPEARED.

THE sudden appearance of Colonel Lytle, his unmistakable recognition by Adrian Burgoyne, had operated upon the latter as a decided shock.

He knew the man in an instant as one of the two schemers who had robbed Patrice Ringold of her fortune—as the emissary of Richard Sheldon, who had, by false testimony, sent him to prison.

Amazed at the confrontation for the moment, forgetting that by no possible means could Lytle recognise him in his changed guise, Burgoyne relaxed his hold of the vine.

The next instant he was flying through space, the agonised cry of the girl he had rescued ringing in his ears.

"Take care! Take care!"

Wavering over the edge of the cliff, fervidly stretching out her hands as if to save her brave deliverer, the girl bade fair to follow him in his swift descent.

The quick grasp of Lytle encircled her arm at a fortuitous moment, however. He dragged her back. Pale, gasping, her senses reeling, Patrice Ringold sank to the green sward, and pressed her trembling hands over her eyes, as if to shut out the picture of the terrible fate awaiting her rescuer on the cruel rocks below.

"Save him!" she wailed—"oh, save him! He risked his life for me!"

"Who?" demanded Lytle. "What does this mean? Speak, girl. Ah!"

Lytle ran to the edge of the bluff, as a vigorous splash sounded.

Then he peered downwards along the steep incline, past the scattered boulders and ridges, and at the very surface of the river where it swept the base of the cliff.

For three great circling eddies showed. It was easy to surmise a tragic ending to the episode of the hour.

"Lost his grip, slid, fell, rebounded! The rocks stunned, the water ended him. Yes, he must have sunk."

"Where is he?"

Panting the words, struggling to her feet, reeling to the side of Lytle, and clinging to his arm for support, Patrice viewed himself and the scene with stricken, frenzied eyes.

"There!" announced Lytle impressively, as he pointed a steady finger at the river.

"You do not mean——"

"Went down like a shot."

Patrice fell against a tree and swayed and rocked to and fro.

"So brave, so sacrificing. Oh, Colonel Lytle! he may come to the surface. Hasten, hasten below, and be ready to offer aid——"

"It is useless," returned Lytle gruffly. "Do you not see the eddies—the water in plain view? That splash announced the death of the man, whoever he was."

The girl uttered a hollow groan. He was her deliverer—that won her gratitude. His eyes had looked magnetic tenderness into her own, as no other man's had ever done—that would be a haunting memory, tangible and sorrowful as the last words of a plighted love.

"And who was he?" demanded Lytle abruptly, turning sharply upon the girl.

"I do not know," she murmured brokenly.

"A stranger?"

"Utterly so."

She sobbed forth the story of her accident, the details of the rescue.

"Why did you venture so near?" asked Lytle.

"You sent me. Do you not remember? I left my mother's little Bible containing the cipher alphabet here, just near the bushes there."

"Ah! And you found it?" cried Lytle eagerly.

He had temporarily forgotten the real mission of the girl, amid the excitement of the moment. Now all the old greed and covetousness flamed back into his sinister eyes.

"No," she murmured in a subdued tone.

"Surely——" he began.

"The wind of the storm last night must have swept it over the edge of the cliff," explained Patrice. "In trying to see I lost my balance."

Colonel Lytle's face grew white to the lips. An imprecation rent the air, fierce, disappointed, hissing.

"Confusion! If that is lost——" he muttered.

"It cannot be lost. No one would steal it. My name is in it. I tell you it must have been blown over the edge yonder."

His face an anxious void of uncertainty and dread, Lytle approached the cliff. He peered into every cranny of the rocks, he scanned the surface in every direction.

Then, almost roughly, he took Patrice by the arm.

"Come," he said peremptorily.

"Where?" She shrank at his touch, her indignant eyes resenting his mandatory bearing.

"Back to the cottage—to Mrs. Loring. That book *must* be found! It is vital, important. Find out where I can secure men, ropes, ladders, to scale the face of the cliff. You have not hidden it? You are sure that you never met the man who is drowned before?"

Patrice flushed scarlet.

Wavering over the edge of the cliff.

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"How dare you?" she panted—and then, the words recalling the victim of the river, she wailed forth: "Oh!

He peered into every cranny.

do not waste time about the book—send someone to see if my poor brave rescuer may not have come ashore further down the stream."

"I tell you he sank like a shot, girl," interrupted Lytle harshly.

Dusk had come ere he secured the assistance he desired. Leaving Patrice, pale and sobbing, in the charge of Mrs. Loring, with two farm labourers Lytle repaired to the cliff once more.

With the aid of lanterns they made a vigorous exploration. One man was lowered by ropes; every boulder, crevice, and ridge was inspected. They even lined the shores at the base of the cliff and beyond, in a boat.

In vain! The precious book and its coveted inclosure, the cipher key, were not to be found.

They had disappeared as thoroughly and mysteriously as had the brave rescuer of pretty Patrice Ringold.

CHAPTER XI.

From the Past.

The splash at the foot of the cliff that had, to the mind of Colonel Lytle, announced the death of Patrice Ringold's deliverer, was not caused by Adrian Burgoyne.

Once relaxing his grasp of the wild vine, he had gone downward with a dangerous velocity, but, less than ten feet accomplished, a mere trifle checked his descent—a frantic clutch at the foliage growing sparsely along his course.

He had caught at a bunch of tough grass. It held for a second, then it gave way in his hand, but that momentary stoppage diverted his progress, and when he fell again it was to land against a little bunch of boulders. His head struck one of these, his body was caught at the top of a slight ridge, and there, sheltered from view from the cliffs overhead, he lay stunned and helpless.

His sudden halt had dislodged a stone. This, rolling down the declivity and striking the water, had caused the splash that Lytle had accredited to himself.

Two hours must have elapsed ere Burgoyne roused to consciousness. He sat up, confused and dismayed, as he considered his situation. The faint light of night—for dusk had long since fallen—enabled him to trace the impossibility of an upward climb; thickly strewn lay the perils menacing a downward slide.

The fall and the concussion had shocked him, that was all. As he reached forth his hand to pick up his hat where it had fallen, its clasp closed as well on a little object lying there.

"A book," he murmured curiously—"a book some one has dropped here. Ah! what is that?"

He mechanically thrust the little volume into his pocket, and his gaze centred on the cliff overhead, as voices sounded, and the glimmer of lanterns showed in its vicinity.

Rapid conversation, hurried orders, continual running to and fro, puzzled him for some moments. He was about to cry out for help, when, for the first time, a distinct intonation reached his ears:

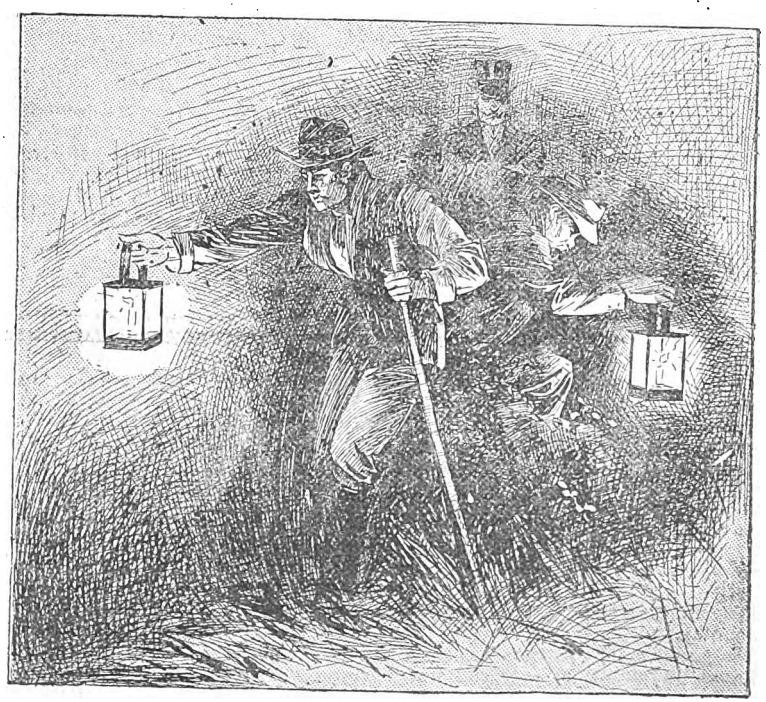
"One get below; I'll lower the rope. Draw it taut across the cliff. We'll stretch it criss-cross, and that will enable an inspection of the whole surface."

"Lytle!" ejaculated the startled Burgoyne.

Yes, the accents were indisputably those of the man whose unexpected appearance two hours previous had so nearly driven him to his death.

What did it mean? In his beleaguered situation the worst fears assailed the imperilled refugee. What could it mean, but that his enemies were once more upon his trail—that in some mysterious way Colonel Lytle had recognised, had shadowed him—that he was seeking for him now?

Every instinct of self-preservation took a keen alarm. The desperate and depressing conviction of the moment sent Burgoyne to his feet, poised in a reckless spring to the dark, gleaming waters below. Then he paused abruptly.



With the aid of lanterns they made a vigorous exploration.

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For a rope grazed him. Its coiled end, flung free from the cliff, curved across the ridge where he stood.

"Got it?" demanded a voice twenty feet above him.

"Aye, aye!" rang out the answering tones, forty feet below.

"Draw it taut and secure it."

With a wild start he read it.

A quick whip of the cable pressed Burgoyne close to the face of the cliff.

"All sound!" came from below.

"Get to the other side to catch the other rope then," came from overhead.

Burgoyne saw the man below leave the spot, the lantern he carried revealing his every movement.

He had tied the end of the rope to a tree at the edge of the cliff base.

A quick resolve come into his mind. He seized the first rope.

The next moment he was descending it, traversing the cliff in an oblique direction.

He landed just where the shore began to widen. Along the edge of the river he ran. There was no pursuit.

The relief of escape dispelled the alarm he had experienced. Then the reaction to injury and excitement drove him to seek rest. After traversing a lonely path for a mile or more, at the edge of a belt of timber he came to a high fence. A great sheltering pile of brush at hand offered seclusion and solitude. In ten minutes he was slumbering profoundly.

The genial sunbeams were filtering through a lace-work of stems and branches overhead when Adrian Burgoyne again awoke.

The events of the past day flitted through his mind with vivid distinctness of interest and warning. If, as he theorised, Lytle was seeking for him, he was not safe in this part of the country.

Impelled to hasten a departure, drowsy reverie held him enchained for some moments, as a flashing memory of the fair, bright creature whose life he had saved, came into his mind.

Who was she? Did Colonel Lytle know her? Why was it that he thrilled in every nerve as again her soft, clinging arms seemed to enfold him, and her breath, sweet as lilies, fanned his cheek?

Ah! not for him the memory! Banish it, drive it away! Love, home, happiness were the portion of those who knew not the prison cot, the clang of rusted locks, the mocking menace of iron bars!

A taint was upon him. He, the man who had herded with the basest of all humanity, to even dare to dream that the pure face, the tender, innocent heart of a guileless, beautiful girl could be aught to him but a bitter memory! A blazing sword drove him back. Convict, refugee—the joys of life were not for him!

He started to leave the spot, with a bitter, resentful sigh. Then he came to a sudden halt.

His hand, groping aimlessly in his pocket, had come in contact with the sole memento of the exploit of the cliff side—the little book he had found among the rocks.

He drew it forth and surveyed it curiously. It was damp from the rain, and the covers were out of shape.

"Holy Bible." He read the name with a stern, quick flash of his eyes.

And then the memory of a grey-haired mother gone to her rest, with a face glorified with the satisfaction of years of earnest Christian duty, his glance softened, his eyes grew humid. Reverently, with awe, he opened the sacred book.

"An omen for good—I will treasure it!" he murmured half-brokenly.

"*Because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.*"

They were the first words that met his eyes. A promise—a revelation. Looking into the future in a swift glance of reverie, Adrian Burgoyne allowed the book to fall from his hand.

It came open at the fly-leaf. As he reached to recover it he noticed a name written there. With a wild start he read it—once, twice, and over again.

In a flash the truth came to his mind; in a twinkling he knew the identity of the girl he had saved from death.

For the words that danced in letters of fire before his bewildered yet comprehending gaze formed the name—

PATRICE RINGOLD.

(To be continued.)

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HIS LORDSHIP'S REHEARSAL.

Everybody has read about Lord Chesterfield's keen wit and polished manners. On returning from a drive, a few days before his death, he met a friend.

"Out taking the air, my lord?" said the friend.

"No, I am merely rehearsing my part in the funeral procession," was the response.

Rather a ghastly jest. We may do him the justice to believe it was forced and insincere. It is one thing to face death courageously, and quite another to speak of it flippantly.

Alluding to a recent illness, a lady living in Liverpool, and, I am happy to add, *now* well and hearty, says: "My relatives and friends thought I should never recover."

This gentle and womanly reference to the most serious of all earthly situations is conceived in a very different spirit from the silly remark attributed to Chesterfield. To these good people the events connected with the passage of a human being from the world were not like a play, which must be ostentatiously rehearsed in advance. No, it was a mysterious calamity, to be mentioned with lowered voices and bated breath.

The circumstances which led to this alarming crisis are best set forth in the lady's letter.

"In June, 1891," she says, "I had a severe attack of Influenza, which left me in a low, weak state. I had a poor appetite, and after eating had an awful pain at my chest, and a gnawing, sinking feeling, as if I was too weak to do anything. I had frequent attacks of giddiness and trembling of the limbs. I had great trouble in going up and down stairs, my breathing being so difficult, at times it almost stopped. I lost a deal of sleep at night, and became so weak that I could scarcely get about. One day whilst out in Wavertree Road I fell down and had much difficulty in reaching my home. I consulted a doctor, who said that I was suffering from debility, and should never be any better. My relatives and friends who saw my feeble state did not think I should ever be well again. I went into Staffordshire, and also to Morecambe, to see if change of air would help me, but nothing did any good. In this helpless state I lingered on until February of this year (1894). I determined to try a medicine that was recommended to me called Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. I got a bottle from Mr. Warhurst, Chemist, Wavertree Road, and when I had taken half a bottle I found relief. My appetite improved, and the food agreed with me, and I could sleep better. I continued with the medicine, and gradually got stronger and stronger. I now feel well as ever, and can eat any kind of food, and go about as usual, for which I bless Mother Seigel's Syrup, but for it I should not be alive. You can make any use you like of this statement. (Signed) Lucy Wilson, 16, Thorburn Street, Wavertree Road, Liverpool, July 21st, 1894."

Thus in a few plain words she tells the substance of her story. But all she went through, and suffered, during the three years of her illness—*that* she does not tell. Why not? Because it is impossible. How could all her thoughts and feelings be so expressed in language that they should seem to you as they were experienced by her? No, my good friend, it may not be. We shall have to excuse her, as under the same conditions we should have to excuse you.

The leading facts, however, we can understand, and make profitable note of. There was the weakness, the pain at the chest, the sinking sensation, the giddiness, the trembling at the limbs, the difficult breathing, the loss of sleep, etc.—we can easily imagine what they mean. The doctor called all this debility, and in a crude sense he was right; but debility is not a disease; it is merely *one* of the results of a disease, just as darkness is a result of the withdrawal of light. Such talk is nought but surface talk, without depth or meaning.

Her disease was of the stomach—indigestion culminating in chronic dyspepsia. The attack of influenza in 1891 did not cause it, but was rather caused by it. The body, through lack of nourishment, failed and weakened more and more; and the end would soon have followed had not Mother Seigel's Syrup expelled the impurities from the blood and restored the digestion to its proper tone and power.

Thus, happily, the Dread Visitor was prevented from crossing the door-sill, and Mrs. Wilson lives, as she says, to "bless Mother Seigel and her wonderful medicine."

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AN EASY WAY TO EARN £100. (SEE PAGE 743.)

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 367. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 11TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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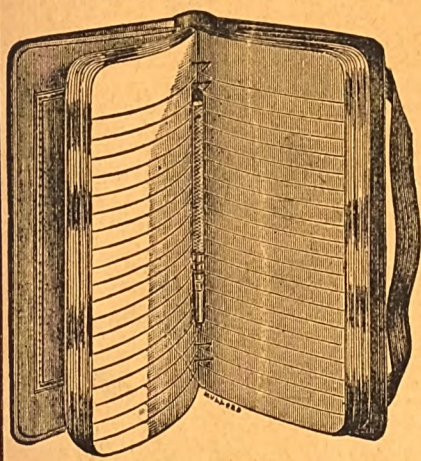

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No. 367.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending January 11th, 1896.

THE SPY'S FATE.

THE bed was comfortable enough to invite repose, but although the solitary occupant of the chamber—a travel-stained, weary looking man—had thrown himself down upon it shortly after the door had been closed upon him, and locked on the outside, he had not remained above a few minutes when he got up again and commenced pacing up and down the room.

Wearing the dress of a farm labourer, there was, nevertheless, a something about him which seemed to imply that he had not long since been through a course of military training, his figure being well-set up. There was, too, a general erectness about him which was out of keeping with the clothes he wore.

He was, as a matter of fact, one of the smartest troopers in the Confederate Army, and the disguise he had temporarily assumed had been suggested by him to his commanding officer as the best means by which he might, if lucky, obtain some important information as to the enemy's movements, which could only be gained by passing through the Federal lines.

A universal favourite with officers and men alike, the former had pointed out to him the risk he would incur, and it was only when his captain found that nothing would turn him from his resolve, that he reluctantly gave him permission to make the attempt.

"Is there any letter you would like me to forward to your people, in case you should be—get taken prisoner?"

"In case I should be shot sir, you mean. The bitter feud between North and South does not admit of much ceremony being shown towards spies, I fancy, on either side."

"You are a brave man, Jamieson, and have proved yourself a good soldier more than once; I earnestly hope you may get through the job all right."

"Thank you, sir, I'll do my best, and the boys shan't have cause to be ashamed of me, I promise you."

That same night, Trooper Jamieson set out on his dangerous mission, and succeeded in making his way through the Federal Lines, thanks to his intimate knowledge of the country; and was within measurable distance of safety again, when he was unlucky enough to fall in with a small cavalry patrol on outpost duty, the non-com. officer in charge of which being struck with the soldier-like bearing of the wandering farm labourer, ordered his men to search him, with a result that more than justified his suspicions, and brought to light papers of such importance that the captor felt his speedy promotion was assured.

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With hands closely bound, he had been placed on horseback, a trooper riding on either side of him, each carrying a loaded Colt's revolver ready to fire should the prisoner show any intention of attempting to escape.

In less than half an hour the escort and prisoner had arrived at the temporary headquarters of the detachment to which the former belonged, a substantial Virginian farm-house which had been temporarily transformed into a barracks, the owner having gone to fight in Lee's Army.

The subsequent proceedings were extremely brief; the prisoner had been taken before the officer in command, the sergeant had made his report, and "To be shot at daybreak" was the order given.

This was several hours ago, and the prisoner had for some time been walking up and down the spacious bedroom referred to at the commencement of this story.

On the table in the middle of the room a lamp was burning brightly, and a supply of writing paper and materials had been set out on it, being the room next adjoining the officer's bedroom, and which in ordinary times he used for writing dispatches and reports, etc.

"Geof promised me she should get it, and he will keep his word, I know. I wouldn't like her to have it from anybody else—poor old mother!

"Now, what shall I tell her? Shall I say I was out on patrol duty? or shall I tell her the truth? Better tell her all about it; she shall never say I died with a lie on my lips—and, after all, why shouldn't I tell her? I have done nothing to be ashamed of. All's fair in love and war. Poor Louie, I wonder if she will fret much—I wonder—bah! time is getting on, and they said six o'clock—only three hours more. Now for it:

"My DEAREST MOTHER,—At the moment I write this I have exactly three hours to live. I am to be shot at daybreak, and my brother Geoffrey, who is in the next room, will give the order to fire. 'Geoffrey!' you say, as you read this—it's true; I am his prisoner, and when I tell you all, your heart will go out to him as it never did before.

"I know you felt hardly against him when he went away, five years ago, and never sent a line to say whether he was dead or alive. He tells me he did write, though, and often wondered why you never replied, but he knows now that the letters never reached you. He will tell you all about it when the war is over, for he means to come home, and stay on the farm for good.

"But how came I to be Geoffrey's prisoner? I can hear you say. Well, when I last wrote I told you I had taken service in Stewart's Cavalry, and the General of our division having been very anxious for some time to obtain certain information, which could only be gained by some one who was thoroughly well acquainted with the country making his way through the Federal lines, I felt there was not a man in the corps so well fitted for the task as I was. So I volunteered for the duty, and having disguised myself as a farm labourer, got through all right, found out what I wanted to, and was making my way back to our camp, congratulating myself on my good fortune, when just as I was within measurable distance of Southern territory, I came across a small patrol of Northern cavalry, was arrested on suspicion—searched. The papers I had risked my life for being found upon me, left no doubt as to my identity, and in less than half an hour I found myself in the presence of Geoffrey—Captain Geoffrey Jamieson of the Federal Army. I didn't know, of course, any more than you did that he had taken service in the Northern Army, but I knew him in a minute; he did not recognise me I saw, but when I spoke he started, seemed to be thinking, and then suddenly I realised he knew it was me. I don't think his men noticed anything out of the way in his manner, and I was glad of that. He asked me if I had anything to say, why I should not be treated as a spy, and shot; and I said I had not, and he never winced, mother, although I could see he could hardly control himself.

"'I will give you one chance,' he continued, in as calm a tone as if he had never seen me in his life, 'and I would remind you that for the sake of your parents (if they are living),' he said, as if he would divine my thoughts, 'you should consider them before yourself. Your first duty is to them. If you can give me any information as to the disposition of the Southern Forces, your life will be spared, and my men shall see you safely across our lines. What do you say?'

"'I have a mother living,' I replied, 'but she would rather a son of hers died doing his duty as I have done than save his life at the expense of his honour. I can give you no information. I have done my duty to the best of my ability. It only remains for you to do yours, Captain.'

"'You refuse my offer, then?'

"'I do, sir.'

"'Very well, then. Sergeant, take your men outside; I will summon you presently.'

"The sergeant saluted, and retired.

"As soon as the door was closed, Geoffrey came across to where I was standing and gripped my hand silently.

"'Arthur!'

"'Geof!'

"'I didn't know you at first, but your voice is the same as it used to be.'

"'I saw you recognised me; I hoped you would not.'

"And then we talked, Geof and I, of you, mother, and the old place, and never a word of what was in both our minds. At last he said: 'You won't split, Arthur, I know that; and'—with the old pride in his voice—'I won't ask you to.'

"'Thank you for that, Geof.'

"'I would let you go, Arthur, this very minute if I dared; but I dare not, they would shoot me for mutiny.'

"'I reckon that's so.'

"'I am not afraid to die, Arthur, but it is the disgrace of it. Look here—you take my revolver—make a bit of a fuss—take it and shoot me—do you hear? Shoot me—here—here'—pointing to his heart—'that door isn't locked—there is only the sergeant and two men outside. My revolver is loaded in all six chambers, you will have five shots left. My mare is waiting for me down in the courtyard. She is faster than any horse my men have. You can get away. Do you see? Quick, man—here it is!' He paused, expecting me to reply.

"'Geof,' I said, 'you have got to see this thing through, and the sooner the better. If you had been in my place I should have done my duty just as you must do yours. I have played for a big stake and lost it. Supposing I was coward enough to do as you suggest, what good would it be, do you think? I could never look the dear old mother in the face again, feeling I had killed you to save myself. No—a thousand times no!

"'Shake hands, Geof. God bless you! Tell her I did my duty, or maybe you'd let me write her a bit of a letter, she would take it kind-like coming from me. You will see she gets it, won't you?'

"Geof said nothing, but he just gripped my hand like a vice. He's good grit, Geof is, and worth a dozen of

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me, mother. Then he went to the door and called the sergeant in.

"'I have endeavoured to get the prisoner to divulge the information I require, but he has refused. You will therefore arrange for him to be shot at daybreak. Say six o'clock a.m. Put him in the room next my bedroom, and let him be supplied with a light and writing materials.'"

Here the letter broke off suddenly; when it recommenced the handwriting was not so firm as it had been.

"When I began this letter I told you my room, the one I am writing this in, is next to Geof's bedroom. Soon after they had placed me here I heard him come into his, but he did not lie down, he walked up and down like I did at first, and then all was quiet. He had gone to sleep after all, then—fancy going to sleep!—and yet I dare say he was tired out, and he gave me a chance, you see. Presently I heard a door open quietly, and Geof came in here. He had taken his boots off, that was why I had not heard him moving. He held his finger up for me to be silent, and then said in a whisper: 'Take your boots off, and follow me.'

"Something in his manner made me do as he said. He always had a masterful way with him, you remember.

"When I got into his own room, he said: 'If you go down that passage at the end of your room, what looks like a cupboard by the side of the bed is, I found out the other day, a second doorway—none of my men know it—you will find a suit of uniform of mine, and my big cloak; I want you to put them on and pass yourself off as me. I always go and visit the sentries at about four o'clock or half-past. You and I are just about the same build and size, our voices are sufficiently alike, and as it is a cool night, you can button the cloak close up round your neck, and by pulling your cap well down, your face will be concealed. The password is Andromeda. Once you get clear of the last sentry, you know your way better than I can tell you. Now go, Arthur, and God bless you! Tell the dear old mother she had no reason to be ashamed of either of us. Give me your hand, Arthur—there, that's off my mind, and now I can go to sleep.' I wanted to stop, but Geof said no, and as gently as a woman pushed me back into this room.

"I have been in the passage and seen the uniform, and, God help me, mother, I took it up, touched it, and I felt like a murderer. I can't do it—I can't do it, and yet it is hard to die; and Geof meant it, I know he did—if only he could get away too—if only he could; he can—he shall.

* * * * *

"I have been to see him, mother, to tell him of a wild, mad scheme that had suggested itself to me, but he was asleep, fast asleep, and such a happy peaceful look upon his face, as if he were dreaming of you, and how you would bless him when you knew all. I could not find it in my heart to wake him, for, after all, the plan that suggested itself to me doesn't seem really feasible. One of us must die."

* * * * *

The old clock in the stable yard chimed out half-past four—the sentries had been on the alert for half an hour past, expecting the customary visit, but no officer came. The lamp in the prisoner's room was growing dimmer. He must make haste if he was going to finish his letter. He sat thinking deeply, pen in hand, and then a sudden resolve seemed to come upon him—what right had he to do this thing—the temptation was great, greater he felt than he could well overcome, but with firm and unhesitating footsteps he walked to the door leading to the passage.

Geof had told him to lock it on the *far* side he remembered. Yes, there was the key, right enough. His hand did not tremble as he withdrew it from the lock and having re-entered the bedroom and closed the door quietly he locked it, not as Geoffrey had told him, on the *outside*, but on the *inside*. The window was open a few inches, sufficiently to allow him to put his hand out, and as he heard the key drop on the turf beneath, he gave a sigh of relief.

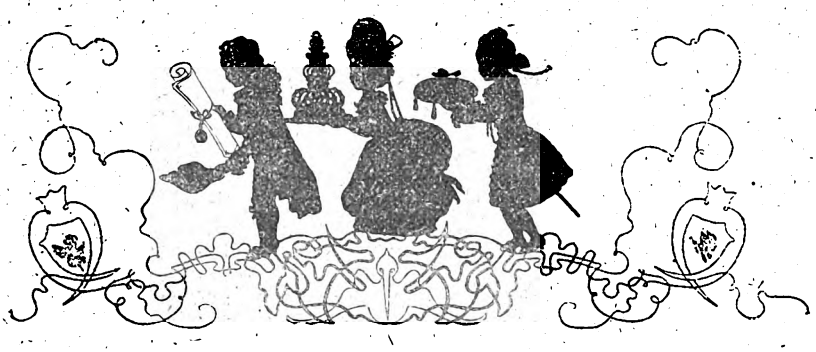
"Thank God for that," he ejaculated. "God bless you, Geof."

The lamp was growing gradually dimmer, but enough flame remained for his purpose; holding the letter he had been at so much trouble to write, towards it, in a few seconds nothing remained but a little heap of charred paper. And then, overwrought by the strain of what he had gone through, he threw himself down on the bed, and slept.

* * * * *

At the close of the war one son was restored to his mother, but the fate of the other has mercifully never been revealed to her.

Peter Parr.



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By E. C. WAGGENER.

SUMMARY.

Colonel Beverly and his step-daughter, Helen, between whom there is little love, are living together at Looe. After a long absence, Helen's sister, Kitty, returns home. She discovers that Helen fancies herself deeply in love with Gifford Vane, to whom she herself was engaged five years ago, but has not seen him since. After several weeks Kitty determines to leave Looe. Gifford Vane again proposes to her, but, for the sake of Helen, she refuses him.

CHAPTER VI.

They had not long been married. Helen came out of the little white cottage and walked quickly down to the gate, where she stood for a few minutes, looking up and down the long dusty street. Then, with a faint sigh, she went back to the house, her step a trifle slow, a little frown of vexation, or anxiety, it was impossible to tell which, on her face.

She had just time to put away her broom and straighten the folds of the snowy table-cloth, which had gone awry, when the sharp click of the gate was heard, and the next moment Gifford came in, looking flushed and tired. She ran for a chair, which she drew close to the window, and into whose comfortable depths he sank with a sigh of relief.

"Are you very tired this evening, Gifford?" she asked, leaning tenderly over his chair. "And what made you so late? Were you too busy to come home earlier?"

"I wish you wouldn't ask me so many questions all in one breath," he said impatiently. "Is supper ready?"—with a hasty glance at the table.

"Yes; I was only waiting for you to come," she answered brightly, as she hastened to pour out the tea.

"Why don't you open some of your windows?" he asked, as he drew his chair up to the table and helped himself to a piece of cold chicken. "It's so confounded hot in here I wonder you can stand it."

"The wind was blowing the dust in from the street," she said; yet she ran and opened both windows. "Maybe you are warm from walking so fast," she added as she came back to the table.

"I don't think I walked any faster than usual," he retorted a little crossly. "Helen"—looking up at her with a frown—"I do wish you'd leave off wearing your hair in that ridiculous fashion. You look like an old woman of sixty."

"I thought you admired it this way," she said timidly, a look of pain and surprise in her gentle eyes. "Which way *do* you like it best?"

"Any way that suits you," he answered with sudden indifference that hurt her far more than his fault-finding had done. Then, as if he already regretted his hasty words, he left his chair and came over to where she sat.

"Don't mind it if I'm out of sorts," he said, kissing her with unusual tenderness. "I ought to be more lover-like in my ways to suit an affectionate little woman like you," he added as her arms stole round his neck, "but when a man marries he doesn't expect to spend his whole time in love-making."

"I don't expect it," said Helen smiling, and yet with tears shining in her eyes. "But sometimes you are not a bit like you used to be—I mean before we were married."

"I must have changed quite suddenly," he said laughing at her solemn face, "for we haven't been married quite three months yet, have we?"

"No. And yet"—with a heavy sigh—"you have found fault with me more than a dozen times."

"Have I? Well, if I did it was for your own good. Why do you parade your ignorance so often, and before my best friends too? Now, the other day, when Hunt ran in on us so unexpectedly, I was sure you would do your best to appear at your ease. But instead I think you tried to show off your ignorance as much as possible. And Bob has such a horror of a common-place woman."

"Indeed, I did try my best to entertain him," said Helen excitedly, "but what *could* I say when he talked about people I had never seen?"

"I know you made a dozen ridiculous blunders when you did talk. And there was no need of your telling him that you had never been outside of Looe in your life."

"I was sorry the moment I told him that, for I saw from your face that you were angry. But, Gifford, why should you be so sensitive about it? It's not my fault that I know so little. Father never would send me off to school ——"

"I know," interrupted Gifford roughly, "but a man doesn't expect to have to educate his wife. It's asking a little too much, I think. And the woman who expects it expects too much."

Gifford certainly meant to make Helen happy when he asked her to marry him. Whether he was actuated by pity, or petty spite towards Kitty, or whether his nobler, better nature prompted him to fulfil his half-spoken promises to Helen—whatever his reasons, he certainly meant to be kind and gentle towards her always. And they were both very happy and contented the first few weeks, he realising more and more every day what a treasure he had won, she content to worship him in a fierce, idolatrous way, without seeming to notice the absence of any great tenderness on his part. Her nature was so sweet and affectionate, so free from jealousy and selfishness, that he told himself in those first quiet days that he had done what was right and best, after all.

But a month or two of close companionship revealed her ignorance and simplicity so plainly as to arouse a spirit of antagonism within him which he tried in vain to repress. Before their marriage her little blunders had made her charming in his eyes; because in her innocence and simplicity she was unlike any other woman he had ever seen. But then he had not the opportunities to notice her ignorance that he had afterwards; and when it became more apparent every day, he was at first annoyed, then ashamed, and at last angry with her for the little tricks of speech and ludicrous blunders that any other man less

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proud and sensitive would have scarcely noticed, or would at least have quietly corrected or ignored.

Helen felt the bitterness of the old vague doubts and fears again; felt, in an undefined way, that her marriage was very different from marriages contracted by men and women who were deeply in love with each other. Not that she believed her husband had ceased to care for her—he had given her no cause to think that; he had simply grown a little careless and indifferent. But it was his indifference, his lack of tenderness, that hurt her.

Poor, deluded Helen! It was well for her peace of mind that she could not read in her husband's face—the face that was fast losing its hopeful, boyish look—the secret regret that was making life hateful to him. It was well for her that she did not know of the bitter rebellion in his heart, or that remorse was poisoning every moment of his existence.

He wanted to do right, he wanted to make Helen happy, and he tried very earnestly to forget the past; but there were times when a great longing for the sight of Kitty's face, the sound of her voice, and the touch of her hand, rose up in his heart and half maddened him. Yet he seldom spoke of her, and gave Helen very little encouragement to speak of her, though he avoided the subject in such an innocent, natural way that she had not the least idea he avoided it purposely.

* * * * *

There was a knock at the front door. Helen herself went to answer it. She was surprised and delighted to find it was their old friend, John Eastman, who had run in to pay them a surprise visit.

It was a merry little party of three that gathered about the table a few minutes later.

"Why, I shall begin to think seriously of getting married myself," John remarked, when she had helped him to a third slice of cake.

She blushed a little, and looked across the table at Gifford, who had suddenly become absorbed in studying the pattern on a plate before him.

"I suppose every man thinks of getting married at some time in his life," she said, breaking a somewhat awkward silence. "Or at least they ought to think about it, if they don't," she added quite soberly.

"Oh, yes; most fellows contemplate matrimony before they are out of their teens," said John lightly. "And"—with a quick glance at her serene face—"the majority of them have a half-dozen love affairs before they settle down to the right one at last. Why, I have imagined myself desperately in love several times since I left Mallingford, but somehow I always got over my fancy without any serious injury to my heart. It was always a blow to my pride, though, to get 'no' for an answer. Love's a queer thing. Here's Gifford, who pretended that he was deeply in love with—"

"Let Helen help you to some more strawberries," interrupted Gifford, looking across the table at his friend with a flush on his face. "They grew in her garden, and are unusually fine for the season."

"I don't think I've slighted them, for I've been helped twice," said John, laughing a little uneasily, for he realised in a dim way that he was on dangerous ground.

When they left the table a few minutes later Gifford led the way to the verandah, leaving Helen to follow at her leisure. Lighting cigars, the two seated themselves on comfortable chairs under the window.

To-night Gifford felt a sense of comfort and rest which he had not experienced for many months, and the conversation drifted from common-place remarks about the village and its people to the old college days, when the two were such steadfast friends and comrades.

"We were both very ambitious in those days, weren't we?" said John in a musing tone. "Yet neither of us has managed to make a great stir in the world."

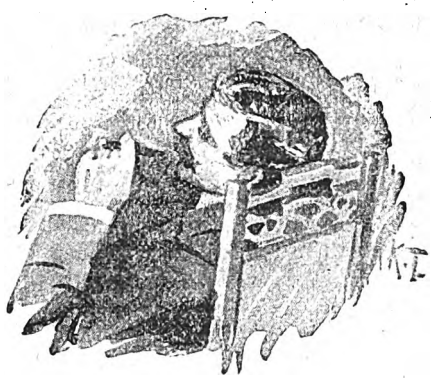
"No," returned Gifford a little absently; and then a long silence fell between them.

"I'm afraid," remarked John suddenly, "that I touched on a forbidden subject a little while ago, but the fact is you owe me an explanation. You assured me over and over again that you and Helen were simply good friends, and led me to make a fool of myself when you might have been honest enough to have told me the truth, and saved me the mortification of a refusal. I was sure, too, that you cared for Kitty."

"I did," said Gifford, his voice husky with some sudden emotion. "I loved her better than my life, and I believed, and believe yet, that she cared for me."

"Then, by Jove! what made you act as you did? Why didn't you marry her? If you were so sure of her love, what prevented you from proposing to her?"

"I don't care to further discuss the subject," said Gifford with sudden reserve, half angry with himself for being betrayed into speaking of something he had mentally resolved should never be recalled.



Lighting cigars.

"I think I understand," and John smiled a little bitterly as he threw away his half-smoked cigar. "Kitty refused you, so you consoled yourself with Helen. And now you want to keep close about it. Well, I don't think you could have done better, though it was hardly fair to Helen. And *I* did care for her very much. You are, I feel, free to speak about it now. It is all over, you know, and we are good friends again. And you might tell me more, seeing I have quite got over my folly. Of course, Helen doesn't know that you cared for her sister, does she?"

"No," said Gifford hastily. "A man is a fool who would speak of such things to his wife, for the best of women are not free from jealousy, and Helen has her share, though I have never given her much cause to show it—at least, not since we were married. It would be very foolish to rake up the past, and I don't intend that Helen shall ever know anything about it. Of course, you think it rather strange that I married her, after protesting that we were only good friends, and all that sort of thing, but there is a little story connected with it that I am bound to honour to keep secret, even at the risk of your thinking ill of me. I'll say this much, however, that while I will never love another woman as I loved Kitty North, I know I am not half good enough for Helen. I realise it more and more every day of my life."

"You need somebody to scold and lecture you every now and then, and Helen is too soft hearted for that," said John, as he lighted a fresh cigar. "And too fond of you perhaps," he added gravely.

"Yes, there's the trouble. She's too fond of me. And she's too intense. John," he added, in a sudden burst of confidence, "whatever you do, don't marry a woman you can't love. Don't cheat yourself into the belief that love will come in time, for it won't."

"There is no prospect of my marrying anyone just at present, and sometimes I'm afraid I'm doomed to remain an old bachelor all the days of my life. I've never yet found the woman who was willing to become Mrs. Eastman."

Just then footsteps sounded in the hall, and presently Helen came out and joined them. She appeared not to notice the chair John hastened to offer her, but stood

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leaning against a pillar of the porch, looking a little ghostly in the darkness, in her white dress and the fleecy scarf she had wound about her dark hair.

"Couldn't we have a little music?" suggested Eastman. "Gifford, you haven't forgotten how to sing, I know; so get your guitar and favour us with something for the sake of old times."

"I've forgotten everything I used to know, and my voice has grown cracked and weak," protested Gifford. "You really will have to excuse me."

He had lighted the lamp.

"Then Helen must give us——"

"You forget that I have no accomplishments," put in Helen, a little stiffly. "So I, too, must beg to be excused."

"By the way, what is the time?" asked John, striking a match and trying to look at his watch. "My train is due at nine o'clock. It's almost that now," he added, as he closed his watch and rose from his chair. "How the hours have flown! Why, I haven't had a chance to say half I wanted to say. But I mean to run up here often—that is, if you'll let me. Gifford, can't you throw off your lazy fit and walk over to the station with me?"

Gifford rose with alacrity, and went into the hall for his hat. "I won't keep him any longer than I can help," said Eastman, as he bade Helen good-bye. "Will you be afraid to stay here alone?"

"Certainly not. I have grown very brave of late," she answered, with a laugh that sounded a little forced and unnatural.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Gifford came back, an hour later, he found Helen still standing on the verandah, and it struck him that there was something a little singular in her attitude.

"Why didn't you go in and light the lamp?" he asked, pausing for a second on the steps. "Were you afraid of the dark? Or were you enjoying the starlight?"

"I wasn't at all afraid, and I don't think I noticed the stars," she answered shortly, as she followed him in and stopped to bolt and lock the hall-door.

He had lighted the lamp when she came into the sitting-room, and he turned and looked at her keenly, a sudden, unaccountable fear in his mind.

"What is the matter?" he asked quickly. "Why, you are as pale as death, child!"

Then all the pent-up agony of the past two hours burst forth in a torrent of passionate words.

"I heard what you said out yonder," she cried in a choked voice—"you and John. I didn't intend to listen. I went to the window and sat down because I was tired, and wanted to rest a little. I did *not* mean to listen to what you were talking about, I want you to understand that. But I heard every word you said.—Are you listening to me?—Every single word you said!"

"Well," and his face betrayed nothing.

His apparent coolness and indifference staggered her for a moment, then her fury burst forth again.

"It was mean and cruel of you to deceive me so—mean and cowardly and cruel! Oh, how blind I have been not to see that you never cared for me! But now that my eyes are opened to the truth, I can understand a great many things that have puzzled me at times. Yet I want to say that I never once thought you cared for Kitty, or she for you. You treated her coldly; you gave me very little reason to believe that you even liked her, and she kept the truth from me. It was a cowardly thing to do, and I hate you both! And I will never forgive either of you, never, as long as I live."

"Listen a moment, Helen," he said, all his seeming indifference vanishing before the look of misery in her face. "Suppose I *did* love Kitty; you and I are married now, so don't you think it would be the wisest and best plan to forget the past?"

"Don't ask me such a question, after what I have heard to-night!" she exclaimed passionately. "I tell you I hate you—hate you just as much as I loved you two hours ago! And I'll never forgive you as long as I live; you can't expect it, you needn't expect it. Oh, what a wretched, wretched mistake it has been! Why didn't you tell me the truth in the beginning? Why, *why* did you marry me when you loved someone else?"

"Because you made such a fool of yourself about me," he answered, in sudden, bitter anger. "Heaven knows I married you against my will and better judgment, for I knew in the beginning that no happiness would ever come of such a marriage."

He was reckless of the effects of his words, for he felt in his heart that nothing he could do or say now would have power to alter her opinion of him or restore her confidence in him. "I have been living a lie long enough," he added, "and am rather glad, after all, that you know the truth at last."

He was scarcely conscious of his cruel, brutal words. He

Her face was turned persistently towards the window.

only felt a sense of freedom and relief in the thought that he was throwing prudence to the winds, and putting himself in a position to shake off for ever the hateful chains that fettered him.

"Then you needn't live a lie any longer," she said, her voice firm, and clear, and sweet. "You can go away anywhere—*anywhere*, just so I may never look upon your face again. God may forgive you for the wrong you have done me—*I* never will!"

"Helen, you don't mean all you have said," he pleaded, his better nature struggling for mastery. "I am not wholly to blame in this matter, and if you will let me explain——"

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"I don't want you to explain anything," she interrupted, her anger flaming forth again. "I have heard quite enough. I can't forget your cruel words, and I want you to go away—to get out of my sight for ever. If *you* don't go, *I* will, for I will never live with you again."

"Are you in earnest?" he asked, his voice betraying none of the passion and pain and self-reproach he was feeling. "Do you really wish for a separation?"

"I do. Nothing could induce me to live with you another day, after what has been said to-night," she answered, her voice faltering a little. Then, as if she feared to trust herself to say more, she hastily crossed the room, and, opening the window-shutters, leant her hot, throbbing face in the cool night wind. He stood motionless in the middle of the room, looking with unconscious admiration at her silent figure.

"You say you hate me," he said at last; "but if you knew all, I think you would pity me a little, Helen. Not that I haven't done wrong, for I wronged you when I married you, loving your sister. But it is useless to waste words," he added bitterly. "I feel that you will never forgive me, so perhaps it will be best for me to go away. We certainly could never be happy together after this."

Helen was silent.

"I don't suppose you'll miss me much," he went on, with a short laugh. "You have plenty of friends here to pity you and help you to forget me. Then, I am not leaving you utterly destitute. This house is yours, besides the interest in your old home; so, on the whole, no doubt you'll get along better without me. Consult some of your friends as to your plans for the future. They are better able to advise you than I am. I shall take nothing with me except my books and a few articles of clothing. Everything else I leave in your hands to dispose of as you see proper. And, Helen"—coming a step nearer the motionless figure—"try to forget me and be happy, for I shall never trouble you again—be sure of that."

She turned and looked at him slowly, and he quailed before the scornful anger of her soft eyes.

"I have told you that I hate you," she said slowly. "What more can I say? Now go, and remember this, that, living or dead, I shall always despise you."

She turned to the window again and buried her face in her hands. Gifford went into the bedroom and packed some of his books and a few articles of clothing into a bag, performing these necessary preparations with feverish haste and with an utter disregard to neatness. When he had finished he came back into the sitting-room and stopped before her.

"I am going now," he said, his voice husky with some emotion, whether sorrow, or remorse, or gladness it was impossible to tell. "I have just time to catch the train. I don't suppose it makes any difference to you where I am going, and, in fact, I don't know myself. Are you afraid to stay here alone until morning?" he asked, as if the question were an afterthought.

"No, I'm not afraid," she answered, without turning her head. "The darkness and loneliness won't be half so terrible to me as your presence would be."

"Then you won't say good-bye?" he asked half bitterly, half intreatingly, as he paused in the door.

No answer. Her face was turned persistently towards the window. Had she been made of stone she could not have appeared more rigid and lifeless. Was this the woman who only a little while ago was all tenderness and love and passion? he asked himself wonderingly. Then he glanced at his watch, and while he made no motion towards going to the quiet figure, still he lingered in the doorway.

One, two, five minutes passed, and still no stir of the motionless form by the window.

With a little sigh he took up the heavy bag, put on his hat, and went out, closing the door softly behind him. Helen heard his quick footsteps on the gravelled path, saw him open the little gate, and watched him in the dim light of the dying moon until his figure was lost in the distance.

"I shall never see him again," she said to herself with a little sob. "Am I glad, or sorry, I wonder? Oh, how strange that last night I was so happy, and to-night we are parted for ever! Yet it is better so than to have kept on living together after what passed between us a little while ago—better this than to be compelled to live with a man who cares nothing for me. Ah! if I could only die! if I could only die!"

Yet her eyes were tearless, and she gave way to no noisy grief over this, the bitterest hour of her life.

After a little while she rose, closed the windows, saw that the doors were securely locked, and determined to go to bed. But not to sleep; that was impossible, when every nerve was tingling with pain and her heart beating almost to suffocation. What was this terrible loss that had come to her? she asked herself over and over again, as she lay there through the long hours of the lonesome night. What had she ever done to deserve this? Nothing, nothing, she told herself. And yet she had lost all that was worth living for.

(To be continued.)

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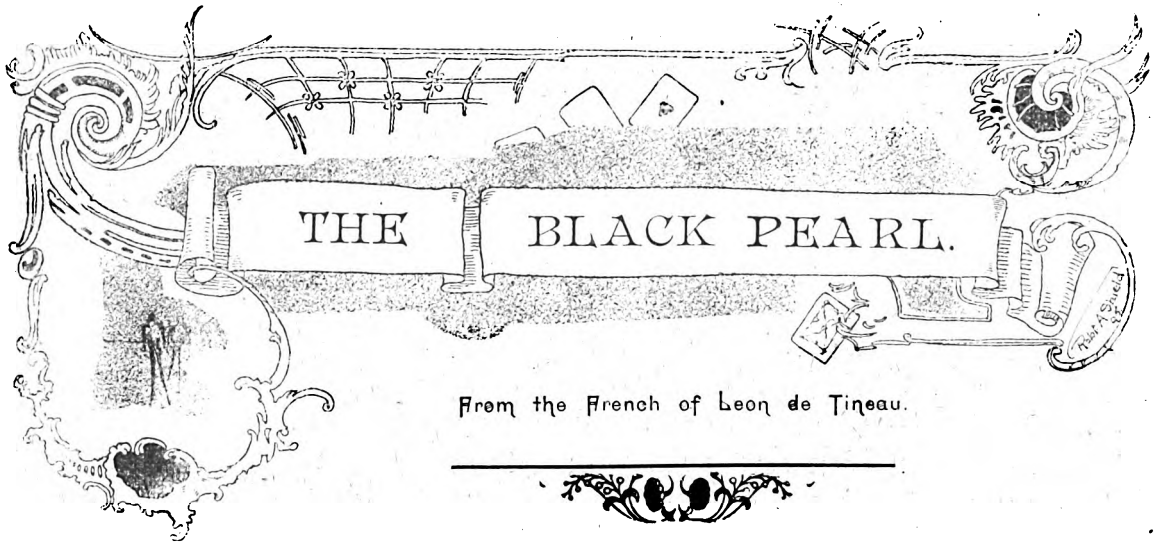

THE BLACK PEARL.

From the French of Leon de Tinseau.

WHEN Parisians about the end of August talk of the "insufficiency of water in the capital," they amuse me. At Aden, on the Red Sea, a city of sixty thousand inhabitants, built on a promontory of lava, you could not, for all the gold of the Indies, find a blade of grass, a salad leaf, or a drop of water.

"But what becomes of the water which falls when it rains?" I asked my friend Pujol, the French Consul, who did the honours one day when I passed through Aden, on my way from China.

"When it rains the public cisterns fill themselves. But it is five years already since the natives have seen even a cloud in the sky."

"Then where did the water at our breakfast table this morning come from?"

"Oh, that came from the factory! The English distil the sea and sell to us an absolutely pure article imitated from Nature. The only objection to the artificial article is its ruinous cost. My water bill amounts to over a hundred francs a month; this, of course, includes my wife's baths, for she abhors salt water."

"Gracious! How then do the poor Arabs get along? They don't seem to have sixty louis a year to spend on their drink."

"They are satisfied with the water that the camels bring every day from the hills yonder, twenty-eight kilometres from here."

I jotted these facts down in my note-book, and we returned to the Consulate, where we were awaited by Madame Pujol, a pretty Marseillaise, whom I had met for the first time that morning. My friend had only lately married, and his wife was not in love with Aden. We talked of the country and its social resources. Madame Pujol told me with a sigh that her visiting list contained but two names—an old English woman, who could not speak two words of French, and the proprietress of the Hotel de l'Univers, a strapping French woman, more accustomed to haggle with Arabian merchants than to talk to a refined compatriot.

As I was pitying her dreary existence, Pujol exclaimed: "Now, my dear, don't dissimulate. Why do you hide the fact that you have an admirer in the Arabian quarter?"

The lady looked annoyed, and shrugged her shoulders.

"An admirer as black as your hat!" she exclaimed.

"Very black, but very handsome," insisted Pujol. "That makes a difference! And immensely rich—the wealthiest coffee merchant in Aden! That means the principal merchant of Mocha coffee. I will take you to see him to-morrow. You will be astonished at his luxurious way of living. He revels in costly carpets and ornaments. His house is a veritable bazaar. My wife spends hours there, and, if I didn't object, this excellent Mouloud would offer her all the treasures of his home, under pretext that its ornaments please the 'lady'."

"How you exaggerate!" said Madame Pujol, more and more vexed. "Don't believe that I make an intimate companion of this negro. Certainly I haven't been there for a fortnight."

"My wife is a little out of sorts," apologetically said the Consul, "because this morning she lost a valuable jewel."

"Indeed, I am inconsolable," she added. "I have vainly sought all day for a black pearl out of my ear-ring that my husband bought for me at Ceylon. By examining its mate you can judge of their beauty and value."

Closely looking at the ear-ring, I noticed Madame Pujol's well-shaped ear and the delicate perfume that emanated from her person. Soon after I went for a siesta on the roof of the house, according to the custom of the country.

The next day my friend and I went to the native quarters to visit "Madame Pujol's admirer." We were accompanied on our visit by a co-passenger and compatriot who was just finishing his tour round the world. He was what you call a *savant*, always taking notes, copying inscriptions, and addressing articles to the "Academy," whose correspondent he claimed to be. Mouloud ben Said, who speaks English like a city merchant, and who is a superb specimen of the Arab race, received us splendidly. Not only did he do the honours of his shop, but, what was still more interesting to us, of his home as well.

Towards the end of our visit we were served with coffee—that is to say, an odorous beverage resembling

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our product about as much as champagne does ginger ale, and which was accompanied by the inevitable *chibouk* and the pitcher of fresh water.

Water which has come seven leagues on a camel's back in leather bottles is not tempting, but I was parched with thirst, and, besides, I had tasted worse things in the rice plantations of lower China. Strange! This water had no taste of leather. Far from it. It was not perfectly limpid, but its taste was decidedly agreeable. It smelt—yes, it did smell of violets. Violets in the heart of Abyssinia! How strange!

The *savant* had made the same discovery as I had, for after having smelled, tasted, and swallowed, he asked me in academic tone: "Do you not notice a peculiar flavour about this water?"

"Yes," I answered, "that of violets."

"Exactly. Well, my dear sir, let me tell you that amid some of the coal strata in the earth there are certain products whose odour is analogous to that of the flower in question. Perfumers even used it to adulterate their extracts. I conclude that this water has come in contact with just such strata. A coal mine at Aden, sir. Think of it! Can you imagine such a stroke of luck? The smallest bit of coal burnt here comes from England."

Hereupon the *savant* deluged our host with questions as to the exact location of the spring whence the camels brought their daily load. He would have gone there immediately, notwithstanding the distance, but his steamer was to sail that night. He wanted at least to bottle a sample of this fragrant water to have it analysed at the Mining School. What astonished me most was to see the visible embarrassment that our discovery caused Mouloud ben Said.

Just before leaving I poured myself another tumbler of water, when I heard in my glass the click of a hard substance, and to my surprise found this to be a black pearl, the mate of the one which Madame Pujol had shown me the day before, and, now that I came to think of it, I recognised the perfume. How ridiculous this *savant* with his coal theory appeared to me, and my poor friend Pujol! What could I do? The superb Mouloud was watching me in a way I did not fancy, and the presence of the husband, the principally interested party, hampered me considerably in my investigation. I sadly thought that consular inviolability, though written in the laws of men, was evidently unknown to Arabs at Aden.

Whilst the *savant* was corking his bottle, I, under the pretext of pouring some water on my hands, succeeded without detection in obtaining possession of the pearl. I was determined to save something for Pujol. As we left the Arab's house, the mineralogist went immediately to the dock. I necessarily had to go to the Consulate to restore the pearl to madame. Luckily, Pujol let me return alone, as business with the captain called him on board the steamer.

"Before making my adieu, madame," I said in rather severe, yet calm tones, "permit me to restore to you this pearl."

She gave a cry of joy. "My pearl! How lucky! Where did you find it?"

"At Mouloud ben Said's," I answered, emphasising each syllable. "I found it there a short time ago. Thank goodness Pujol is ignorant of my discovery."

And as she looked at me with wide-open, astonished eyes. "I know nothing more," I continued with dignity, "and I want to know nothing. Useless to add, I shall act like a gentleman, and will speak to no one of this sad affair. Good-bye, madame!" I left the room almost without touching her hand, but showing all my indignation in a last look. I wanted her to know that at least she had not deceived me. I found my friend on board, and embraced him with an effusiveness that astonished him. Poor Pujol! An hour later I carried my secret far from Aden.

The other day I met Pujol and his wife on the boulevard. They seemed more tenderly attached than ever; the two black pearls again adorned the young woman's ears. We all dined together, and naturally talked about Aden.

"By-the-way," said the Consul, "you taxed our imaginations for a week by your lucky find at Mouloud's. Weren't you rather puzzled yourself?"

Just then I was more embarrassed than puzzled, and I muttered an answer that had neither rhyme nor reason.

"We found out, a week after your departure," explained Pujol, "that my servant had invented a singular plan to increase his perquisites. He resold to the Arabs the water which my wife used for her baths. We think the pearl must have fallen into the bath-tub and thus was taken to Mouloud ben Said's. How did you find it?"

"*Parbleu!* I came near swallowing it!" I exclaimed, glancing at the blushing Madame Pujol.

That did not prevent our *savant's* full account of the undiscovered coal pits of Aden from being read at the Academy of Sciences.

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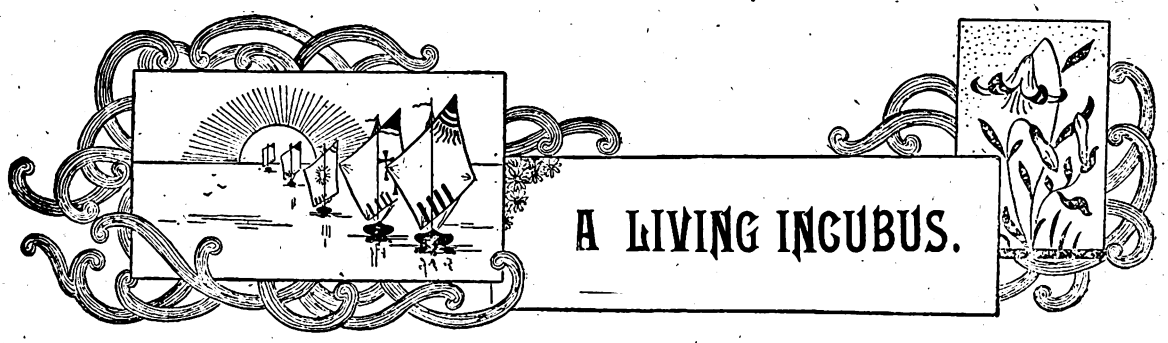

A LIVING INCUBUS.

WE were sitting smoking our cigars; my old friend the Doctor and I, in a bay window facing the sea, which was only divided from the house by the intervening roadway and a stout wall. My host had been telling me (and it was not difficult to believe him) that when the wind was on the land, and there was a big sea running, it was often practically impossible to proceed along the roadway in front of his house, or if anyone attempted to do so, they would be half drowned.

On this particular evening, however, the sea was in one of its quiescent moods and the suggestion that we should change and go for a row for an hour was unanimously agreed upon.

In a few minutes we were in a nice light rowing boat not so light and cockleshell-like in construction as those I had been used to on the Thames. but not sufficiently heavy to make rowing at all laborious, and roomy enough to accommodate a party of four or five persons. The tide was running out, which at this particular part of the coast means parallel with the land, and the strength of the current was sufficient to carry us along with a stroke of the oars now and then.

Gradually we drifted into a little cove to the westward of the town, which in days gone by had been a noted

I gave him a cigar, and he subsided into my special arm-chair.

place for smuggling, and I asked the Doctor if he had ever seen anything of it.

"No," he replied, "there was, I believe, 'a run' in this very cove a few years after I came here, but it has been discontinued for a great many years past. Do you see that wooden fencing at the top of the cliff to our right?"

"Yes; what of it?"

"Only this, that soon after I came here I very nearly lost my life at that spot, and after a good deal of trouble I induced the local authorities to erect a fence there."

"It looks a dangerous spot, certainly. How did it happen? Did you become dizzy or miss your footing?"

"Missed my footing, and if it had not been for the assistance of a man whose very presence had become a nightmare to my existence, I should most certainly have been dashed to pieces. If you like to take the oars and paddle back slowly—the tide has just turned, I see—I will tell you all about it."

We changed our positions in the boat and the Doctor began:

"It was just such another evening as this, I remember, and I was sitting at the open window of my house—not the present one, but one farther away from the centre of the town, and opposite what was then a small wooden jetty—when I saw a stranger walking aimlessly up and down. Something in the man's movements gave me the impression—I cannot say why—that he contemplated committing suicide, and I made up my mind to watch him.

"I had not long to wait, for after making two or three journeys from one end of the jetty to the other, on reaching the extreme end he either intentionally, or from a sudden feeling of faintness, lurched heavily from side to side, and in so doing overbalanced himself and fell into the water.

"I am, as you know, a good swimmer, and throwing my coat off as I went along, I was soon at the spot where he had disappeared, and plunged in. I could see nothing of him, but by diving where I judged he had gone down, was lucky enough to find him at the first attempt. I brought him to the surface, and had no difficulty in keeping him afloat until we were both picked up by a boatman who had seen me jump into the sea and lost no time in rowing out to discover what was wrong.

"The man, who had the appearance of a broken-down gentleman, apparently about thirty-five years of age, was quite unconscious, and my house being the nearer, the boatman and I between us carried him in, quickly removed his clothes, and by prompt measures soon succeeded in bringing him round.

"After a while I endeavoured to elicit who he was and where he came from, but his mind seemed to be a perfect blank, and so far as I could make out, he was totally unaware of the danger he had recently passed through. To my various questions he returned monosyllabic replies, and thinking he might be better after a

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good meal, I asked him to join me at dinner, an invitation which he accepted as if it were quite a matter of course, and not only did excellent justice to the good things my housekeeper had provided, but after dinner asked me (it was the first request he had made) if I had any cigars.

"I gave him one, and having subsided into my special arm-chair and made himself as much at home as if he had known me all his life—for the first time since we had been brought into such strange contact—a look of satisfied contentment was apparent on his face, as if he had at last found what he had been longing for.

"I am, as you know, fond of a good cigar, and those in question were particularly fine.

"The evening wore on, one cigar was followed by another, without a word being spoken between us, and I not unnaturally began to wonder as to how I was to induce him to take his departure.

"'I don't know whether you are staying in the town,' I remarked at last, 'or——'

"'I only arrived to-day, but I suppose I must stay on now; at least, you have decided that I must.'

"'I, my good fellow; what do you mean?'

"He looked at me in a dreamy way.

"'Why, I belong to you, don't I? You saved my life; you would not have done that if you had not wanted it; I had no further use for it, and intended, as I dare say you realised, to throw it away. You, for some reason best known to yourself, took possession of it. It must have been a close thing though, I fancy; I don't remember anything after the water went over me.'

"'My good man, I only did what any man would have done under the circumstances. You were in danger of being drowned; I am an expert swimmer—there was no danger to me in fishing you out—and——'

"'I don't think you quite realise the position,' he interposed. 'I did not ask you to fish me out; all I wanted was to rid myself of what is no earthly use to me—my life. Practically speaking, I threw it away—at least, I intended to. You picked it up; it is yours; you have the advantage; henceforth you have two lives—mine and your own. I relinquish all claim to it. I transfer my identity and the attendant responsibilities in the way of providing the necessary supply of food and clothing to you.'

"'You must be mad, surely!' I replied.

"'I think not; but, as a doctor, you should know best.'

"'Well, supposing I had not pulled you out, what then?'

"'Ah, but you did,' he said, with a chuckle. 'and you must have wanted my life to save it as you did.'

"'Good Heavens, man, don't you understand? I saved you from yourself; saved your life in order that I might give it back to you to make a better use of it in the future, I hope.' I said this in what I meant to be an impressive manner, but he was not by any means awed, unfortunately.

"'I didn't want my life given back; it is no good to me, and as you have taken it you must do what you like with it.'

"'Ha!' I said, 'you admit that?'

"'I do.'

"'Then if your life belongs to me absolutely, I can do what I like with it, without consulting you at all?'

"'That is my contention.'

"'Then'—in an exultant tone—'you can't swim; what is to stop me from pushing you into the sea and letting you drown as you want to?'

"'People would call that murder, wouldn't they?' he said quietly.

"'What about suicide, then?'

"'There is, I think you will admit, a distinction between the two.'

"'Confound you, what do you want?'

"'Nothing!'

"'Nothing?'

"'Not so far as I am concerned; for, as I have endeavoured to explain to you, I as an individual have ceased to exist, my individuality having become merged in yourself. Is it not nearly time we went to bed?'

"'You don't mean to say——'

"'Oh, no; any sort of a shakedown will do for me. I should like a glass of whiskey before I go, if you don't mind.'

"I complied with his request, and then rang the bell for my servant to show him his room.

"'At what time do you take breakfast, sir?' He was annoyingly humble all the time, I may remark.

"'Nine o'clock,' I replied, 'but it may be earlier to-morrow, as I have to go to London for the day.'

"'Will you require my attendance, sir?'

"The request was made in such a tone of quiet assurance that I felt myself powerless to make a suitable reply. After pausing awhile, he quietly withdrew.

"After he had gone, I sat down to think the thing out, but do what I would, I could not arrive at any satisfactory conclusion. Nobody would believe me if I told them the facts of the case.

"The next morning my self-imposed guest was down to breakfast before me, and greeted me quite cordially as I entered the room.

"During the meal neither of us spoke, but at its conclusion I announced that I was going to London for the day, and if on my return I found he had not gone, I should call in the police to remove him.

"'You are, of course, at liberty to do as you think fit; but you yourself brought me here, and as I have already explained. here I am compelled to remain. I am helpless in the matter. Should the officers of the law remove me, I shall consider it my duty to resume my proper position at the earliest possible opportunity.

"'And what do you consider your proper position, may I ask?'

"'To place myself unreservedly at your disposal; I, or what was I, belong to you as I have already said. It seems useless to repeat the fact.'

"'My train is nearly due,' I replied, 'as I hastily prepared to go; but, mind you, if I find you here on my return I shall give you into custody.'

"To this threat he made no audible reply, but I fancied I could detect a grim chuckle of satisfaction. To give him a chance, I prolonged my stay in London for upwards of a week, but to my surprise on my return he was still in possession of the place, and he had, so my housekeeper informed me, been making himself very much at home indeed.

"'He don't do nothing, sir, but eat and drink and sleep. He had his dinner just now, and directly after lay down on the sofa and went to sleep, and you will find him there now, I expect.'

"I looked into the dining-room, and there sure enough he was, snoring placidly.

"'This must be put a stop to, somehow,' I said to myself, and started off for a walk along the cliffs we saw just now to think things out.

"I halted when I got to the summit of the cliff where the fence is now; there was no fence there then, and

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taking off my hat I let the wind blow on my heated face.

"'I would not stand so near the edge if I were you,' said a voice behind me. I looked round; there he was.

"'Am I never to be free of your hated presence?' I exclaimed furiously.

"'That is for you to decide,' he said calmly.

"'Then jump over the cliff and have done with it,' I shouted, without thinking what I was saying.

"Without a moment's hesitation he advanced to the edge, and in another instant would have done my bidding. Frantically I clutched him by the arm and

"I put down twenty sovereigns on the table."

drew him back. I could not be a murderer. He made no more resistance than he had done when I pulled him out of the sea.

"In attempting to save him my foot slipped, and I felt that I, and not he, was in imminent danger of being dashed to pieces on the shingle below; as it was I fell over the edge of the cliff in its most precipitous part, and only the fact of my right hand coming in contact with a small shrub to which I clung with the tenacity of a drowning man clutching at a straw, saved me from a horrible death.

"The man whose life but a week before I had saved at risk of my own, stood above me looking on unmoved.

"'Give me your hand, for Heaven's sake!'

"In an instant he rose to the occasion, and with a presence of mind for which I should never have given him credit, lay down flat on the grass, and having obtained a good foothold by placing his feet behind the stem of a bush, stretched out his right hand, which I just managed to reach with my left, and then with a strenuous and almost superhuman effort rescued me from my perilous position.

"I must have fainted away I suppose, for the next thing I remember was finding myself a good way from the edge of the cliff, with my companion standing close by.

"'That was a near thing,' he said, in his habitual quiet tone of voice.

"'It was indeed; and I shall ever be grateful to you for having saved my life.'

"'Yes, I saved your life that time, I think.'

"'You did, indeed, and by Jove, that makes us quits, you know.'

"'Well, not exactly. You see you didn't want to throw your life away, and I did; still, I suppose as I saved yours it belongs to me, as mine does to you.'

"'Well, I don't want yours, and you don't want mine; let's exchange.'

"'But consider the difference in value yours is—'

"'Don't let that stand in your way. What do you say? Will a tenner equalise the matter?'

"'Make it twenty pounds and it's a bargain.'

"'Come back with me, and you shall have it at once,' I said, feverishly anxious to get the thing settled so easily."

"And did you?" I asked, as my host paused.

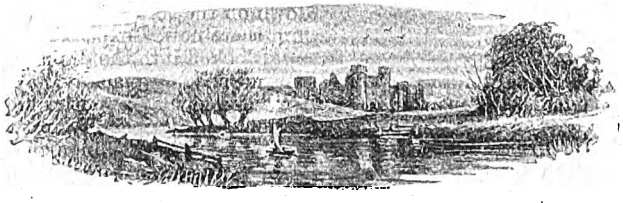
"I am pleased to say I did. On the way back neither of us spoke a word, but when I put down twenty sovereigns on the table—he liked gold better than a cheque, he said—he heaved a sigh of regret, and remarked in his quiet way, as he picked up the money: 'You have restored me my identity, sir, but believe me, I would willingly have allowed things to remain as they were, the quiet and repose of your hospitable establishment have been very pleasing to one whose lines have not been cast in altogether pleasant places of late. Let us hope there is a brighter future in store.'"

* * * * *

"And did you ever see him again?"

"No; and I hope I never may. A week was quite long enough."

S. J. F. Newbery.



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IN THE DAYS OF SHAKESPEARE.

THE Thames three centuries ago had characteristics essentially differing from those that distinguish it in the present day. Gone are the palaces and gardens which from Whitefriars to Westminster adorned its banks; the six-oared canopied barge has given place to the smoky steamboat; in fact, everything has succumbed to the march of triumphant utility.

Things were not always so. As still, on the waters that wash the marble palaces of sea-born Venice, music nightly sounds, and love breathes his sigh, so, in the good old times that shall never come again, did the gallant, gliding over the unpolluted stream, woo his mistress.

The particular gallant whom we are about to describe, though on terms of familiar greeting with Essex, Raleigh, and the choice wits of the day, did not belong to the aristocratic class; yet on his person and bearing Nature's nobility was stamped. A conical hat with a single feather adorned his head, his doublet was slashed and of the finest broadcloth, his ruffles were of rich Flanders lace, and the hilt of his straight sword, a present from the Queen, was set with rubies. And this was the deerstalker of Stratford-on-Avon—Shakespeare.

The great dramatist was in the summer of his days. Love for an object, warm, breathing, living, had kindled its fires in his heart; to this lovely incarnation of all his poetic dreaming did Shakespeare, on the night in question, urge his wherry down the Thames.

Jessy was a daughter of the despised people who regard Abraham as their great progenitor. Her father was an usurer, and hung out his sign on the Old London Bridge. It was just above the third arch from the City side.

There were but two things in the world dear unto him—his money and his daughter. From her extreme loveliness Jessy had obtained the *sobriquet* of the "Beauty of London Bridge." Many of the illustrious of her tribe had sought her hand in marriage, but Jessy was deaf to each splendid overture.

Shakespeare's wherry glided on, and in a few minutes, having entered the deep shadow of the arch, he landed on the wide projecting starling. Jessy's sleeping apartment was far above; but the girl, unknown to her father, had the key of a lower chamber which opened on a small balcony; and thence, by means of a short ladder, she let herself down into the arms of her enamoured poet.

Shakespeare resigned his sculls to his attendant. The beautiful Jewess was wrapped in a velvet mantle trimmed with minever. Her large, dark, passionate eyes were now raised to the heavens, spangled with stars, and now fixed in melting tenderness on him who sat by her side. And thus they glided on.

"If thou dost love me," said Shakespeare, pressing the maiden's hand, "thou wilt never again enter the habitation of one who, harsh, bigoted, and cruel, is unworthy to call thee daughter. Flee with me this night! I will protect thee against a thousand fathers. This bosom shall be thy honour; thy love shall be my paradise."

"Not yet," said the girl timidly.

The moon had nearly set and a deep gloom was falling over the river. Jessy was anxious to return, and the wherry shot back to the bridge. As they approached, Shakespeare perceived the figure of a man standing on the broad starling beneath the Jew's residence.

"It is only a waterman, love; there, he is gone."

Jessy trembled, but the man had indeed disappeared round the buttress, giving them reason to believe that he was no other than the individual named. The beautiful Jewess was lifted by Shakespeare out of the wherry.

"Farewell, love! Forget me not," whispered the poet of Avon. At that instant Shakespeare started, for he felt his arm seized and compressed as in a vice by a sinewy hand, while words were hissed in his ear.

"Christian! dog! hound! Have I found thee?"

By a violent effort he flung the human viper from him, and as the setting moon shed a glimmering ray through the granite arch he recognised the father of his Jessy. The Jew waved his hand.

"Begone! thou disgrace to thy tribe! Thou reproach to thy father! Or I shall slay thee!"

The girl, shuddering and overawed, crept up to the little balcony, and in a few moments disappeared. The Jew seemed suddenly to have formed a resolution, and dashed forward, exclaiming:

"Unbeliever! contemner of the law of Moses! oppressor of our race! it will be no crime to send thee whither thou wouldst but go at last!"

"Old man, I woo thy daughter honourably."

"Son of Belial! Even thine honourable love would be infamy!"

With the quickness of thought he mounted to the balcony that projected over the starling and drew the ladder, by which he had ascended, after him. Shakespeare, although he divined not what the Hebrew's motive might be, waited the result of his action with anxiety. Presently he heard a faint cry like a supplication for mercy; then a shriek broke out on the stillness of the night. The father and daughter appeared at the topmost window which overlooked the Thames.

"Curses on thee and thy paramour!" exclaimed the Hebrew, dragging forward his struggling child. "Thou shalt not live to bring this disgrace on my name."

She fell. The Jew's flashing eyes marked his child sinking to the rushing waters far beneath; a fiendish exultation lit up his countenance, and he smoothed his beard and laughed. Shakespeare was filled with horror at what he had witnessed; he plunged into the stream to the rescue, but the tide which was flowing so rapidly had carried her throughthe arch. She floated now at a distance—sank again—the agonised swimmer reached her at length, and succeeded in placing her in his boat.

In desperation he conveyed her to the house of a medical man on the bankside; but every effort to effect resuscitation proved abortive: the light of life was quenched.

The bard knelt at the tomb of the once lovely Jewess. His poetic fancy heard her gentle voice in every passing wind, and the flowers that decked the turf seemed to breathe the perfume of her sign. In after time, when grief for her whom he had loved softened into a hallowed worship, he embalmed her memory in imperishable verse. The Jessy of Old London Bridge is the sweet Jessica in the *Merchant of Venice* and her diabolical father, unrelenting Shylock.

LE VIER.

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By PAUL ROPER.

AN INSOLUBLE MYSTERY

ABOUT seventy years ago a young man of strong physique and prepossessing appearance arrived at New Orleans. He had come from New York, of which city he was a native, and had brought with him a considerable sum of money, supplemented by a letter of introduction to Judge Favart de Caumartin, who was then at the flood-tide of his fame.

Hepworth Coleman was rich, and what was perhaps a greater misfortune, he had no living kinsfolk for whom he cared or who cared for him. Practically speaking, he was alone in the world; moreover, he had an imagination. Scott's novels, Byron's poetry, the French romances, and I know not what else of the sort, had been his chief reading. For physical recreation he had turned to fencing and pistol practice. When I add that he was but twenty-two and unmarried, the rest may be guessed. Healthy, vigorous, full of spirit, he nevertheless had sentimental longings, as indefinite as they were persistent.

If it seems strange that he should have been attracted to New Orleans rather than to the Old World, we must remember what New Orleans was in 1820. No other city, not even Paris, could at that time compare with it as a centre of genuine romance. Nor was this romance unmixed with lawlessness of the most picturesque kind. Money poured into it from a hundred sources more or less illegitimate, beside the streams of wealth produced by cotton, sugar, and rice industries.

Hepworth Coleman had heard much of the gay city, of its warm, odorous atmosphere, its hospitality, its social charm, the smack of restless romance in all its ways. Somehow the desire to go there took hold of his imagination, and he went.

The letter to Judge Favart de Caumartin was given to Coleman by his banker, who, in handing it to him said:

"I don't know the judge personally, never saw him; but he has done a lot of business through us. He is very rich, evidently very influential, and certainly will be of use to you. I feel that I can take the liberty of sending you to him, because—well, he is under many obligations to the bank, and is likely to want many more large favours. I fancy that you'll find him a trifle eccentric, but enthusiastically hospitable. A creole of the creoles, I judge him to be, and a representative of the nabobs."

Young Coleman considered himself lucky to carry with him a document that would give him introduction to a person so renowned as Judge Favart de Caumartin, of whom he had been recently reading a good deal, owing to a duel fought between the judge and one Colonel Sam Smith, of the United States army, in which the latter had been killed. The duel had brought out history, from which it appeared that Judge Favart de Caumartin had fought before, not once only, but many times, and always to the death of his antagonist.

Along with these facts were disclosed numerous picturesque details of the judge's past life, with more than hints that in his young days he had been a pirate or something of the sort. The account also made the most of his wealth, his almost reckless liberality, his eccentricity, and, most of all, the air of mystery which still hung over his business operations.

All this was rich food for an imagination already thoroughly saturated with the spirit of romantic adventure, and during the voyage from New York to New Orleans, Hepworth Coleman found deep satisfaction in anticipating what he felt was in store for him. In every fibre of his frame he felt the assurance that he was on his way to new and strange experiences.

His banker had sent a letter to precede his arrival by a few days, asking a friend to secure suitable apartments for "Mr. Hepworth Coleman, gentleman," the consequence being that a dark young man, small, but well built and handsome, met him at the landing stage to conduct him to his suite of elegant rooms in Royal Street.

"Is you Meestu Coleman, sah?" inquired this young stranger in a musical tone of voice. "I look fo' zat ma' at Prayson."

"Yes, sir, that is my name," said Coleman briskly, at the same time showing by his look that he would like to know whom he was meeting.

"Varee glad you come, Meestu Coleman; varee glad, sah, indeed. Got your rooms all prepare fo' you, sah. Yes, sah, zey is beautiful and sharming rooms."

"Thank you; I am much indebted. Are you the gentleman to whom Mr. Cartwright, the banker, wrote in my behalf?"

"Nah, sah; not any banker write to me. I been tole to meet you at zis place at Prayson. Happy to see you, Meestu Coleman; varee happy."

There was a carriage at hand waiting for our friend. A negro driver in livery, and a small black footman stood by.

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Coleman entered the vehicle, followed closely by the young creole who had met him on the landing. He saw his baggage hoisted into a little waggon to come after the carriage.

For some reason not exactly explainable, this whole proceeding affected Coleman peculiarly. He felt a sort of vague uneasiness, as if he were passing into an air of mystery, if not of danger.

As he was whirled through the narrow streets he caught glimpses of queer tile-covered houses, with curious hanging galleries: high walls and gloomy courts flanked these, and here and there a dusky palm or a bright orange tree flung up its foliage. Blooming magnolia clumps filled the air with a heavy, languid odour.

But what most attracted the attention of Coleman was a company of four or five young men, dressed like dandies, swaggering along on one of the pavements, and singing a drinking song at the top of their voices. One of these hilarious fellows made a lasting impression on our young friend's imagination. He was a tall, olive-skinned, handsome man, apparently about twenty-five, strikingly dressed in a plaid coat, a vest of red and black velvet, grey trousers, and a profusely ruffled shirt.

Evidently he was the leading spirit of the party. At all events he was somewhat in front, with his black cap set well back on his shapely head, while his jet-black hair fell in shining curls over his strong shoulders. He was shouting forth the French drinking-carol in a voice as sweet as it was loud, and at the same time waving in the air a small cane. The entire group looked the worse for wine, their faces flushed and their eyes brilliant.

"Varee glad you come, Meestu Coleman."

"Who is that strange looking man in front?" inquired Coleman of his creole companion, as they passed them by.

"Zat ge'man ees ze Juge Favart de Caumartin," was the answer that fairly startled the interrogator.

Coleman actually grew red in the face and exclaimed: "That Judge Favart de Caumartin! Surely, sir, you are mistaken?"

"Beg pahdon, sah, zat ees Monsieur Juge Favart de Caumartin. I him know varee well myself at Prayson."

Coleman turned and stared back through the window at the strutting youthful figure leading the noisy rout.

How could that be the celebrated duellist, the mysterious pirate?

"It cannot be he," he muttered aloud. It is impossible."

"Varee well, Meestu Coleman," said the young creole drily; "but I mus' inqui' yo' pahdon, sah. Monsieur le Juge Favart de Caumartin ees to me well acquainted. I weemark to you, sar, zat zare ees not any mistake."

The leading spirit of the party.

"Oh, certainly, sir, I beg a thousand pardons!" exclaimed Coleman pulling himself together and seeing his breach of etiquette. "Of course you are right, but I was so surprised to see the judge looking so young. I had supposed that he was an aged man. I am astonished."

"Oh, Monsieur le Juge ees not so varee young—not so varee—hees hair not much grey."

While they were still discussing this matter the carriage stopped in front of a square, heavy-looking house, which, painted a dull red and projecting its upper gallery over the pavement, flung out on either side a heavy brick wall, on whose top was a jagged dressing of broken bottles and jugs. It looked more like a convent than a lodging-house.

Hepworth Coleman found his suite of rooms admirable in every respect; large, airy, luxuriously furnished. His creole conductor parted with him at the door without any explanation whatever of his connection with the matter of these elegant apartments or with making his arrival easy and pleasant.

Some silent and obsequious negro servants were at hand to do his bidding; but he soon dismissed them, while he flung himself upon a sofa and lit his pipe. Altogether incomprehensible to him were the suggestions of secrecy and mystery connected with his reception; scarcely less so was the youthful—nay, boyish—appearance of Judge Favart de Caumartin.

As if the mysterious atmosphere meant to continue growing denser, it was while he lay on the luxurious scarlet sofa, smoking, resting, and meditating, that a beautiful girl came and stood for a moment in the doorway of his chamber. She blushed sweetly at the sight of him, recoiled violently, and then slipped swiftly away, leaving behind her a rustle of fine stuff, a sparkle of rare jewels, and a lingering bouquet of violets and roses.

Coleman felt the delicious shock of her magnetic beauty thrill through him. A sort of shimmering outline of her form wavered, or appeared to waver, in the door after she had gone, so dazzling had been the effect of her fresh, pure, flower-like, yet intensely human beauty. He heard her feet tap swiftly and lightly along the hall. Involuntarily and with unpardonable curiosity, he sprang up, and hurrying to the door looked out; but she was not in sight. For the first time in his life he felt his heart beating unnaturally.

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Evening was drawing on, sending a soft twilight into the room, when Coleman's dinner was brought in by a shy and silent old coloured woman.

The moon was shining brightly when Coleman went forth for a short walk in the street. Not many people were abroad, it being the dinner hour; but certain cafés were crowded with men and women who were drinking champagne and discussing the dishes on well-spread tables.

At the door of one of these gorgeous rooms Coleman met the young man whom a few hours before he had seen leading the rout of singers in the street. It occurred to him that now was as good as any time to present his letter to the judge, so he forthwith stepped near him, and said, lifting his hat:

"I believe I have the honour of meeting Judge Favart de Caumartin."

The gentleman stared at him a moment very deliberately, then just a suspicion of a smile, and with a courteous dignity wholly inimitable and indescribable, doffed his queer little black cap as he spoke:

"And who does me the honour of addressing me?"

"I am Hepworth Coleman, of New York."

"Ah!"

"I hold a letter to you from Mr Phineas Cartwright, of the firm of Cartwright and Vanderveer, bankers."

"Indeed! I feel honoured."

Coleman produced the letter and tendered it, but not without a vague feeling of insecurity of some sort. He had not expected this peculiar reserve and caution on the part of the judge. Could it be that he was to be treated as an infliction to be borne for mere policy's sake? His distrust and doubt, however, were of short duration, for the judge had no sooner read the epistle, which was much longer than any mere letter of introduction, than his whole manner changed. He held out his hand.

"I am charmed, delighted, sir," he said with a slight creole accent that made his voice very pleasing. "I am proud to see you. I hope you find your rooms agreeable."

Coleman clasped his hand and felt that measure of relief which comes when one is suddenly lifted out of a very awkward situation.

The judge read the banker's letter over again with great deliberation, and apparently with much concentration of mind, while Coleman, who could not remove his eyes from his fascinating dark face, stood waiting for the opportunity to say:

"You do me infinite honour, judge, in quartering me in your own house. I had not expected, and could not expect, such hospitality."

The judge hesitated; then with a calm smile remarked that whatever he could do for so distinguished a visitor would be but a small expression of the greater hospitality that he would like to bestow were he able.

"And now," he presently continued, "come with me to my own private apartments, where we can have some quiet conversation and a smoke."

Coleman could not fail to see that the judge was still somewhat touched with wine, though the mood of wild hilarity had passed off.

They passed along the street until they reached a narrow blind alley, into which the moonlight fell but dimly between dusky walls.

To Coleman's surprise, the judge led the way into this, then up winding and rather rickety stairs to a dark hall, along which they passed for what seemed a great distance. At the end the judge fumbled for some time, and by some means opened a low, heavy door leading into a room that reeked with the odour of tobacco and the fumes of wine.

Passing across this by the light of a dim dormer window they reached a close passage-way which led them to another prison-like door which the judge managed to open after a great deal of trouble.

The room that they now entered was exceedingly small a mere cell in extent, as Coleman felt rather than saw, the walls, dam and grimy, being almost within reach on either hand.

A beautiful girl came and stood for a moment in the door.

"Stand here for a moment, please," said the judge, touching Coleman's arm, "until I call a servant."

Then he stepped briskly back through the doorway and drew the solid shutter to with a clang. Some strange echoes went wandering away as if from distance to distance, above, below, around, followed by absolute silence.

Coleman stood amazed for a few moments before going to the door, which he found immovable. He groped round the wall only to discover that there was no other outlet.

Judge Favart de Caumartin's residence was a large, rambling structure, more like a hotel than like a private house. Considering that his wife was dead, and that he had but one living child, a daughter of seventeen, it was strange that he kept up such an extensive establishment, in which perhaps twenty rooms stood richly furnished but unoccupied. It was his pleasure, however, and his pleasure was law.

That evening in the library the judge told his daughter that he had given a suite of rooms in the farthest corner of the mansion to a wealthy young gentleman from New York.

"I have had letters from my friend Mr. Cartwright, my banker there, asking me to take care of him, and this seemed the best I could do under the circumstances. I did not see my way to bringing him any nearer to us. We don't care to have another member added to the family, eh, Olympe, dear?"

Mdlle. de Caumartin blushed; she may have felt a touch of guilt because she could not muster courage to tell her father that she had already seen Mr. Coleman.

Mdlle. Olympe sat for a moment on his knee and stroked his long black hair.

"You will stay with me to-night, father dear," she presently murmured coaxingly; "you will not go out to-night."

"I must be gone a little while," he said, rising at once, "but just a little while."

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She clung close to him.

"Not this night, please," she urged, with a touching tremor in her voice. "Oh, you remember this night a year ago you had that dreadful adventure in the dark room. You must not go out; please, for my sake, do not."

An expert observer would have seen while this was going on a strange, half worried, almost fiercely-concentrated expression in the judge's eyes. It was as if he really wished to remain with his child, but could not by any effort resist some powerful temptation tugging at him and drawing him away.

He kissed her tenderly, pushed her gently from him, and went out.

The girl cast herself upon a sofa and buried her face in her hands, as a vision of that night one year before came up before her eyes.

Some strange masked men had brought her father home far in the night, white as a ghost, helpless, speechless, apparently dead. They put him down there in the room and vanished.

He had no wound, no bruise, no mark of any violence, but he recovered very slowly, and he never told what had befallen him.

A year had passed, and she might not have recalled the exact anniversary but for the prattle of an old servant, to the effect that she had seen her master, the judge, marching at the head of a company of masked men, himself wearing an "invisible" mask and a queer black velvet cap.

Mdlle. Olympe observed that her father was flushed, as if he had taken too freely of wine, and his bearing was indicative of some subtle and indescribable excitement within him. When he went away she felt that something startling was going to happen soon.

The girl cast herself upon a sofa.

* * * * *

When Hepworth Coleman suddenly found himself a prisoner in that close, dark room, he did not at first suspect any treachery on the part of Judge Favart de Caumartin. He expected that gentleman to return in the course of a few minutes: but this favourable impression was soon removed by certain startling events that crowded one upon another.

First, a low, rumbling, clanking sound, like the beating of metallic gongs in the distance, came through the walls and filled the cell; then as this died away to utter silence, he heard tumultuous whispering all round, above, below. The thousand voices all seemed to be saying the same thing, which presently he made out to be the words: "The Krewe is coming; make ready for the Krewe!" When the whispering ended little purple lights began to flash here and there, but so mysteriously did they twinkle that he could not locate them, and these were followed by phantom faces, wan, waxen, faintly luminous, appearing and fading instantly, succeeded by intense darkness.

Now, Hepworth Coleman was a man of iron nerve, an athlete in body and spirit, who, although full of romantic and poetic impulses, was in the depth of his heart as brave and steadfast as a lion; still, even the best courage has its moment of faltering, and just at the point when one whole wall of his cell was withdrawn, so that he stood in the full glare of twenty brilliant chandeliers that lighted a large, gorgeously-decorated hall, he felt the blood grow stiflingly heavy on his heart.

Before him stood a file of fantastic figures, men oddly clad and strangely armed, who clashed their brazen shields together and pointed their swords at his breast.

Coleman stood gazing while the file of armed men—perhaps platoon would be more correct—went through some silent but intricate evolutions, after beating their shields together and threatening him with their swords. When the movements were ended one of the maskers came up to him and struck him lightly with the flat of his weapon across the cheek, saying in a loud whisper:

"Beware! you are in imminent danger!"

Coleman took him at his word and instantly let go a blow from the shoulder. His close-set fist met the masker's jaw with a sound of crashing pasteboard, and down went the man outstretched at full length on the floor, his shield and sword giving forth a muffled clang as they crossed upon the soft carpet.

Quick as a cat Coleman leapt forward and picked up the sword, a beautiful rapier, and, assuming a defensive attitude, cried out boldly:

"Come one at a time and I will fight you all!"

The fantastic figures looked at one another with evident questioning, though not a word was said.

Meanwhile the fallen one scrambled to his feet and uttered two or three bitter French execrations. The leader rebuked him with gestures.

"Come one at a time you cowardly villains," repeated Coleman, "and I'll soon finish you all. Come on, the first one, if you dare meet a man!"

He was terribly angry, but his voice was steady and even.

There was a space of silence, then the leader said something to one of the men, who immediately cast aside his shield, and advanced with his rapier.

It was a short conflict. Coleman disarmed his antagonist with ease in less than a minute.

Another man came on and shared the same fate, with the addition of a prick through the wrist of the sword-arm.

This was exhilarating to Coleman in his exasperation at being made the butt of some mysterious trick.

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"Come next," he cried, "I want the best of you—and the best is a coward. Come on!"

Evidently the mystic band now felt the gravity that the occasion was assuming. The maskers looked to their leader.

"Don't stand there afraid," sneered Coleman; "come and get your turn. Who's next?"

One after another responded, only to fare badly. As yet, however, all had escaped without deadly hurt, when the leader himself made ready to fight. Those who had come to grief were quietly cared for by others, and all seemed to treat the proceedings as by no means startling or even unusual.

When the leader threw aside his shield and took off his tall plume-covered hat, Coleman was able to recognise Judge Favart de Caumartin more by his form and bearing than by any disclosure of his features.

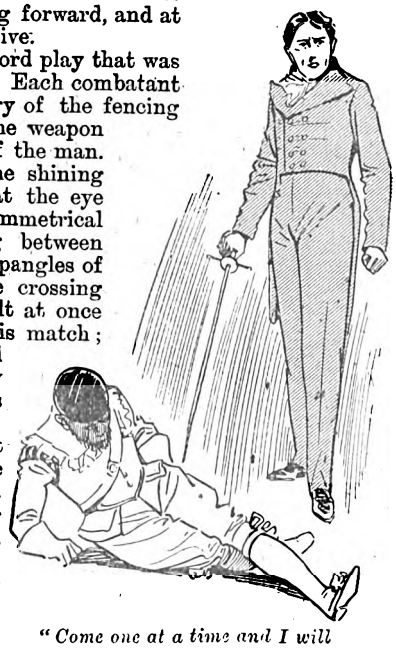
As the judge handled his rapier all the company of maskers, even the sorely wounded ones, came forward to look on with eager expectation. His was steel that never yet had failed to find the vitals of his opponent; but, on the other hand, there stood Coleman, steadfast and alert, the very picture of strength and will, the embodiness of quickness and certainty, his sword bearing at its point a tiny red clot of blood.

They looked with straining eyes, and did not feel sure of the result even with their captain as their champion.

"Come on, sir, and take your punishment, you cowardly leader of cowards!" exclaimed Coleman, in a most exasperating tone. "Don't stand their dreading it; pluck up a little nerve and come on!"

It is useless to say that Judge Favart de Caumartin needed no bullying of this sort to urge him into combat. With beautiful swiftness and grace he sprang forward, and at once took the offensive.

Then followed sword play that was amazing to look at. Each combatant showed that mastery of the fencing art which makes the weapon appear to be part of the man. So swiftly leapt the shining shafts of steel that the eye saw only fine symmetrical figures shimmering between the fighters, while spangles of fire leapt from the crossing edges. Coleman felt at once that he had met his match; the judge tingled with the discovery that here at last was a master.



"Come one at a time and I will fight you all."

From the first it was a fight to the death, if possible. Neither could hope to disarm the other, nor was there probability of any mere disablement ending the contest. The watchers, looking on in breathless suspense, heard with intensely straining ears the almost magically rapid clinking of the blades.

Coleman fought as if with the energy of all the accumulated romance of his recent experiences, half-recognising, as he parried, and thrust, and feinted, and recovered guard, the vivid picturesqueness, the melodramatic unreality, and yet the deadly intensity of the situation.

A fine glow of enthusiasm flashed, indeed, into his blood, and with it an excess of cunning, grace, and swift certainty of hand and eye.

All round him the vague spirit of dreamland seemed to hover, though the hideous pictures of skeletons and cadavers gleamed real enough in the glare of the chandeliers. What inspired him most, however, was the knowledge that he was trying his force with that of the greatest duellist in the world, and one that had always killed his man.

There was something more that gave spirit and courage to Coleman; he was, in some indirect way, remembering the beautiful girl who had appeared at the door of his room, and he half imagined that he was doing battle for the right to know more of her. Youth is a mystery in itself, and love knows no law of origin or of progress.

By some cerebral sleight, some trick of thinking under a thought, so to speak, Coleman was making a love dream keep time to the ringing strokes of his sword. A girl, whose name he did not know, whose voice he had never heard, was inspiring him as he strained every nerve.

As the combat proceeded the lookers-on saw that Coleman's play was new to the judge, who found great difficulty in meeting and parrying certain eccentric movements that invariably ended in a thrust of lightning quickness. Presently the judge tore off his mask with his left hand; he had to do this at the risk of his life, for he could not breathe freely with it on, but his great skill saved him even then; nay, more, it came near to giving him the victory. As Coleman lunged, the agile creole leapt aside and returned quickly with a wicked thrust that barely reached his adversary's breast, piercing it to the depth of half an inch.

Now the fight took on more of passion and less of grace, as if the men felt that it was to be a test of strength at last. Round and round, back and forth, this way and that, they leapt and recoiled and advanced, their faces—one dark and beautiful as a Southern night, the other fair and magnetic as a New England June day—fixed and staring, the white froth gathering on their lips.

When the end came it was like nothing ever before witnessed in a New Orleans duel. How it happened not one of the observers could tell, but the two men appeared to rush into each other's arms, and then it was seen that each had run the other through.

That broke the charm. The masked men sprang forward and separated the combatants and all began to talk at once.

Judge Favart de Caumartin and Hepworth Coleman were, by order of the judge himself, taken to the judge's mansion, where their wounds were examined by physicians and surgeons who were quickly summoned.

Mdlle. Olympe de Caumartin found herself nursing two almost dying patients at the same time. Although she suspected that this was the result of a duel between her father and the young stranger, she was not told the secret of the affair until long afterwards.

Strange to say, although the judge was much the older man, and was wounded much nearer the heart, he recovered and was walking about in his house before Coleman had even taken a turn for the better. The first

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thing he did was to order his daughter to cease her nursing of the young man.

"It is not proper," he said, "for a young girl to be the nurse of a man who is a stranger."

Mdlle. Olympe blushed scarlet, and was so confused that she could not find a word to say. It had been a great pleasure to her to wait upon Coleman, who, though for the greater part of the time quite insensible of her presence, seemed to respond better to her care than to the treatment of the doctors. She had been having her sweet dream, was in love with him, indeed, and the command of her father struck her like a blow.

Judge Favart de Caumartin suspected the truth about his daughter, and was not slow in making up his mind in the matter. He gave strict orders that the hall between Coleman's rooms and the rest of the mansion should be kept at all times locked and barred.

Love laughs at such precautions. Hepworth Coleman during his convalescence lay on his back and thought of nobody but Mdlle. Olympe, and when at last he was able to get up he sent for her. It so chanced that the judge, having got well in a measure, was gone up to Natchez on business.

Mdlle. Olympe did not go to see the young man, but she wrote him a very pretty note explaining her father's wishes.

Mdlle. Olympe blushed scarlet.

"But he has never forbidden you to come and see me when you are able to walk so far as the library," she added very frankly, "and I see no reason why you should stay away."

When the judge returned it was too late to interfere, as he soon discovered, and he had to bow to the inevitable.

The mystery of the adventure with the masked men in that secret hall has never been further explained. Judge Favart de Caumartin would not consent to his daughter's marriage until he had exacted a promise from Coleman that he would never divulge what he knew.

The truth was that Coleman knew very little. He tried to discover the blind alley into which the judge had led him on that eventful evening, but although he made many inquiries there was no such alley to discover.

The whereabouts of the mysterious hall cannot be pointed out to-day, although from that memorable Tuesday in the spring of 1820 up to the Mardi Gras of 1861, every anniversary of the Mystic Krewe has been duly celebrated by a fantastic band that at a certain hour of the night parades the streets of New Orleans. I do not refer to the regular carnival societies; these are but playful imitations of mystery and nothing further.

The genuine Krewe, as weirdly strange and mysterious as ever, may be seen only in Royal Street, a small band headed by a tall, slender, dark man, who wears an invisible mask and a quaint black velvet cap.

From what quarter they come nobody has ever been able to discover; who they are is not known even to the great Rex, the King of the Carnival. Their whole being seems to be enveloped in mystery.

Hepworth Coleman and Mdlle. Olympe de Caumartin were married in due time, and lived in Royal Street all their lives. Every year, on the evening of Mardi Gras, they were called upon to give a dinner to the Mystic Krewe, thirteen in number, who ate in silence with their masks on. The last of these dinners was in 1860. That year saw the twain, who, for forty years had been happy together, laid in their tomb side by side.

Strangely enough, there is no record whatever of Judge Favart de Caumartin's death; indeed, there is a tradition to the effect that it is he who still leads the Mystic Krewe.

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THE LAMB AND THE LION.

I.

WHOEVER first bestowed the *sobriquet* of "The Lamb" on Peter Grey had a happy thought. It fitted him like a glove. Peter looked lamb-like, and his disposition did not contradict his face.

Indeed, but for Rosie Stallard, he might have carried his reputation for humility to the grave. She, however, lit the flame of love in his inoffensive breast, where it burnt so fiercely that his gentle nature was turned to steel, like iron in the Bessemer furnace.

Rosie was the belle of Allerton, a beauty, tall and graceful, but a desperate flirt. Peter admired her greatly, as a beggar might a princess; but he would never have got further than a casual greeting—they had long been slightly acquainted—had she not encouraged him.

One Sunday evening he found himself sitting next to her in church. She was without a hymn-book, so shared his. After the service she waited at the door to thank him. They walked home together, and thus it began. Several pairs of jealous eyes saw the couple, the news spread, and next day, at the workshop, banter, some of it barbed, descended upon Peter's head in showers.

"Take care, Peter," said Dick Pettifer, whom Rosie had jilted. "She'll be as sweet as best golden syrup for a week or two. Sugar-candy won't be in it till she takes up with somebody else, and then you'll find she's vinegar, and no mistake."

The warning made no impression.

"What's your number, Peter?" asked Dave Harden, who, perhaps by reason of his ugliness, had escaped Rosie's toils.

"What do you mean?" rejoined Peter, off his guard.

"Well, I've lost count. I can't recollect whether you're Rosie's ninety-ninth or hundredth victim."

But Peter could not be induced to open his mouth again.

At about the same time the subject was being discussed in Mrs. Stallard's front garden. Rosie was absent, of course.

"Peter's a steady lad," said the widow, who was inclined to be proud of her daughter's numerous conquests. "If she was to want to marry him, I shouldn't have no objection, as his sort always makes the best husbands; but I misdoubt she's only having a bit of fun, and she'll soon find him too quiet for her."

"And what then?" asked Mrs. Pettifer, who resented Dick's rejection as only a mother can.

"She'll get another. Gals like her need never be short of a sweetheart. And a broken heart or two against her won't spoil her appetite."

Mrs. Pettifer flared up on the instant.

"She didn't break my lad's heart. Anyhow, he hasn't took to his bed yet. The next time I see Peter Grey, I'll tell him what you've said. See if I don't!" And she bounced out of the garden.

She kept her word. But Peter only laughed. All the warnings, which were many, had no effect. He continued to walk out with Rosie. The girl's motive can only be guessed at. Perhaps Peter's humility amused her; possibly she was entertained by the metamorphosis in his appearance. Until he took up with Rosie, Peter had always patronised the unambitious village tailor, but very soon after that first Sunday walk he blossomed out into a very gay flower indeed. It might have been that she was unable to quarrel with him. When a youth is slow to take offence, no matter how grievous the slight, it is difficult for a girl to dismiss him.

They had been courting, or at least walking out together, about three months when "Craddock's World-famed Hippodrome and Wild Beast Show" chanced to visit Allerton. Very soon afterwards Rosie expressed a wish to go.

"I want to see Signor Kellini perform with the lions," she said. "I saw him on the top of one of the cars the day they came. He's just splendid!"

Peter was delighted. He wanted to ask a momentous question, and he thought if Rosie were pleased, that would be a very favourable opportunity. She had been rather cool for some days, in fact, ever since the arrival of the "World-famed Hippodrome."

Later on that evening, which happened to be Saturday, Peter dressed himself in his best and called at Widow Stallard's cottage. Rosie was ready. Soon both stood on the green, admiring the extraordinary pictures which adorned the front of the great booth. While they gazed a gigantic, jolly-looking man in red tights and spangles appeared on the platform in front of the tent, gave the big drum a tremendous whack, and commenced to address the spectators in a beautiful Irish brogue.

"Walk up, ladies and gintlemen! Su—r—re, an' it's the best show on ear—r—th ye'll see this noight for six-pence! Walk up!"

"That's him!" whispered Rosie. "That's Signor Kellini, the great lion tamer! Isn't he handsome?"

He certainly was a remarkably good-looking fellow. His black hair curled all over his head, and the ends of his waxed moustache almost reached his ears. But Peter did not share Rosie's admiration. Perhaps he felt the contrast between the giant's magnificent frame and his own rather puny figure.

"He has got a big voice," he said.

"Stupid!" muttered Rosie, "he's a splendid man."

At this juncture the Signor, whose wife addressed him as "Pat," and whose friends called him "Kelly," caught sight of his admirer and her sweetheart.

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"Arrah, Miss!" he cried. "If the bastes only see your bonny face, su—r—re they'll be pleasant and good-timpered for a week o' Saturdays. Don't be afther disappointing the crathurs, sorr. Walk up, an' bring the colleen. It'll be a mercy to 'em, bedad!"

"Yes, come on," said Rosie imperiously. And they ascended the steps.

When the booth was pretty full Mr. Craddock commenced the circus performance, which soon came to an end. Then a cage containing a lion and two lionesses was drawn into the centre of the ring. Signor Kellini entered at once and drove the animals over a bar and through a hoop in the approved style with shouts and pistol shots, finally bringing the show to a close by opening the lion's jaw and placing his curly head in the animal's mouth.

During this performance Rosie never once took her eyes from the lion-tamer. Her cheeks glowed with excitement. She stood almost breathless. And when the daring Irishman emerged from the cage amid a storm of applause, she turned to Peter and whispered:

"If ever I marry that's the sort of man I'll have for a husband."

Peter coloured and looked away. He certainly was not that sort of man. Being unable to think of anything pertinent to say, he held his tongue. But on the way home he asked her if she meant it.

"Of course I did," she answered.

A long silence followed.

"I've been thinking," said Peter, at length, "that it's about time I asked you if you'd have me. I suppose it wouldn't be any use?"

She laughed scornfully.

"Have *you?* Have a duffer"—that was the word she used—"like you? I should think not, indeed!" and she tossed her head. "You're all very well to walk out with, Peter, but when I marry, I'll marry a *man* like Signor Kellini."

What so many had prophesied had come to pass. Peter halted then and there.

"Good night, Rosie," he said without the least anger, and he left her, with her mocking laughter ringing in his ears.

II.

ON Monday morning Signor Kellini was perched on the topmost step of his caravan, smoking a dudheen almost as black as his curly hair, when Rosie's rejected lover drew near.

"Good morning, sir," said the youth, in his respectful, humble way. "I should be very much obliged if you would tell me what would happen if a stranger was to go in among your lions?"

"H'what'd happen?" laughed the jovial giant. "Bedad! they'd ate him and look round for another soft tit-bit av the same sor-r-t."

Peter looked blank. "Are you quite sure?" he asked.

Signor Kellini glanced at him keenly.

"H'what are yez afther? H'what's yer game?" he demanded.

Peter hesitated. "I want to put the lions through their performance," he faltered at length.

Signor Kellini's roar of laughter might have been heard a quarter of a mile away.

"You! This bates Banagher! A little chap loike you? H'why—h'why—sure thin, if Marco looked at yez, ye'd fall in a faint an' die that minute!"

"Try me," said Peter resolutely; and there was an expression in his pale grey eyes quite new to them. The lion-tamer noticed it and ceased his chuckling.

"H'what is it ye're afther, anyhow?" he demanded again. "H'where have I seen yez before?"

"In the show, or outside, on Saturday night," said Peter.

"Sure, an' so I did—wid the purtiest colleen a man 'd wish to set eyes on. Bedad, now, if there isn't a petticoat at the bottom av this it's a raal Hitalian I am, an' not Pat Kelly at all, at all. Out wid it! Tell me h'why ye're wanting to do it."

Peter Grey told his story in few words, but not without hesitation. Its immediate result was a fit of laughter that surely put the lion-tamer's life in danger, for his neck was very short and thick.

"Marry a man loike me!" he roared. "Me! wid a wife an five childher! Och, wirras thru! If Kathleen heard her she'd tear her eyes out. Och, murther! Marry me—Pat Kelly! A colleen wid eyes like sloes, an' a figure as supple as an antelopes. Su-r-r-e, ye're dhraming!" And he roared again.

Peter waited until his laughter died away in a series of diminuendo chuckles.

"I thought if I showed her that I wasn't afraid of lions, either," he said, "she wouldn't be so scornful next time I asked her to have me."

"An' aren't ye afraid of lions?" demanded Signor Kellini.

"Well, she as good as said I wasn't a man, and I'd risk a lot to show her different."

"You've got the grit in ye, anyhow. Ye don't look it, but it's there. Put yer hand in this."

Signor Kellini extended his huge fist. Peter obeyed, though the giant's grip made him wince.

"Now," the lion-tamer went on, "I'll tell yez h'what 'd happen an' ye went into the cage alone. Marco would go for yez shtraight, an' if we got yez out aloive it'd be a miracle. If I went in wid ye it would be risky. Lions are loike ladies, an' strangers must be properly introduced. If I tell Craddock h'what ye're wanting, he'll jump at it. It would be good business for him, bedad. He'd send a handbill round, sure, an' half the folks in Allerton 'd come on the chance av seein' yez torn in pieces. But that wouldn't do for me. It's not Mr. Craddock, but meself would have to see yez through. H'what'll ye pay if I do it?"

"Five pounds," said Peter promptly.

"Done!" cried the lion-tamer. And they shook hands on the bargain.

"An' h'when 'll ye do it?"

"To-night, if you like," said Peter.

But Signor Kellini shook his head.

"That'd be certain death," he said. "Say next Saturday, an' come an' show yerself to the lions as often as ye can."

With that understanding they separated.

Mr. Craddock raised no difficulty. On the contrary, he lost no time in giving a printer an order for a thousand bold handbills. The printer, who knew Peter well, suggested the wording, with the result that all whom it might concern were informed that "on Saturday next, at 8.30 p.m., Mr. Peter Grey, a young gentleman well known in Allerton as 'The Lamb,' would enter a cage containing 'three full-grown Lions of the Desert' and assist Signor Kellini in putting them through their performance."

Great was the sensation. Great the amazement. A good many people were wholly incredulous.

"It can't be our 'Lamb'—our Peter Grey," they said.

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"He hasn't pluck enough to go into a cage o' rats, let alone lions."

A bill was delivered into Widow Stallard's hands. In great perturbation she showed it to Rosie.

"Look here, lass, Peter Grey's going into the lion's den at the menagerie. There isn't another Peter Grey in Allerton, as I knows on; besides, this one's 'The Lamb.' He must ha' gone mad."

The colour left the girl's cheeks, but she said not a word. As soon as she could, she went out and waited for Peter returning home from his work.

"You shan't do it!" she cried, pointing to the bill which she carried in her hand.

"I shall," said Peter.

"Then I'll never speak to you again."

"That won't be half so bad as what you spoke the other night," rejoined Peter desperately. "And if you speak *about* me you won't be able to say I'm no man."

"Don't do it," she pleaded. "Don't, Peter, for"—she hesitated—"my sake."

"I've made up my mind," said Peter doggedly, but in a softened tone. "Because I've quarrelled with nobody, and never wanted to fight, and have taken all sorts of foolish jokes in good part, everybody in Allerton seems to think I've no pluck. I'm going to show them different."

"But if the lions kill you everybody 'll say it was my fault," she urged.

"No, they won't," he answered; "for I haven't told a soul except Signor Kellini, and him I had to."

Rosie looked at her supposed poor-spirited lover in admiration. There was anxiety also in her expression, but admiration predominated. It was the first time he had seen such a look in her eyes, and it thrilled him. But his purpose remained unchanged.

"If I were to say I'd have you, Peter," she began, and paused. "If I were to say *that*," she went on, "and say as well that I'm very sorry for what I spoke on Saturday night, would you give it up?"

"No," he answered; "not now the bills are out." And he went his way.

Rosie returned home. For the first time in her life she had been repulsed. With a girl of her character years of devotion might have been less effective. The tables were turned completely. She, the scorner, now admired.

III.

THAT eventful Saturday night arrived. Half the population of Allerton had gathered on the Green, and one topic of conversation prevailed—the coming performance of "The Lamb" with the lions. It was not exactly the thing itself which caused the sensation; there was nothing particularly wonderful in it, and nothing new. But the man was Peter Grey. There lay the marvel.

By half-past seven the great tent was thronged. Rosie Stallard had come with her mother and a crowd of neighbours. She looked pale, but proud. All Allerton was talking about the man she had treated so badly, and she was quite prepared to consider his notoriety as homage paid to herself—at second hand.

Not that all were unanimous in approval. Some, the minority, said Peter Grey was a foolish young man, and the police ought to interfere; but by far the greater number were ready to pat him on the back and laud him as a hero. Human nature ran very strong in Allerton.

At 8.30 to the minute there was a great shout as Peter appeared in the ring, bearing a whip and a pistol, and followed by Signor Kellini, who carried an iron bar. The lion-tamer acknowledged the applause in the customary manner, but Peter looked neither to right nor left. With head thrown back, shoulders squared, lips tightly compressed, he led the way to the cage and waited.

Springing up the steps Signor Kellini entered the cage and admitted Peter. As the iron door clanged to, the lions leapt to their feet, and fixing their burning eyes on the stranger, lashed their tails angrily. A lioness tried to steal past the tamer, pressing her tawny body against the bars. It was a critical moment, but Signor Kellini sprang before her shouting, and she slunk back. Then the tamer fixed his bar in position, and Peter stepped forward amid dead silence to drive the lions over it. He cracked his whip. They refused to budge, but faced about, growling furiously.

"Shtrike—shtrike!" whispered the Irishman hoarsely, "or be jabers you'll be kilt dead!"

Realising that his life was in deadly peril, Peter laid about him in earnest. The lion, cowed, turned and leapt the bar, followed by the lionesses.

The shout of applause which greeted the termination of the first act was almost loud enough to rend the canvas roof.

An attendant passed up a hoop. Without removing his gaze from the furious animals Signor Kellini took it and gave it to Peter, whom he relieved of the whip and pistol. Standing in the middle of the cage Peter held the hoop level with his shoulders. The lion-tamer strode forward, brandishing his whip. One lioness leapt through the hoop, then the other. It was Marco's turn. He hung back, growling, for a moment, then sprang wildly, missed the hoop, apparently by accident, and fell on Peter, who went down as if he had been shot and lay still.

There was a loud, horrified "Oh!"—a woman's scream—then dead silence again.

Signor Kellini caught up the iron bar, and strode across to the insensible form of his too venturesome assistant. The lions fell back and stood glaring. But Mr. Craddock had entered the cage. He drew Peter out. The tamer followed, still fronting the lions. The show was over.

A doctor who chanced to be present examined Peter amid such a scene of excitement as had never been witnessed in Allerton, and declared him to be suffering from a broken arm and dislocated shoulder. Luckily, Marco had not drawn blood. For the first time in his life Peter was taken home in a cab.

It is no exaggeration to say that more people visited the Grey's cottage during the next week than had done so in all the years since it was built. Rosie was almost the first to call.

"I'm a bad, silly girl," she said, as she bent over Peter's bed, "but you'll forgive me, won't you?"

"Am I a man?" he asked.

"There's not a man like you in all Allerton," she answered, "nor a lover."

That was very satisfactory, of course.

They were married soon after Peter was able to get about.

For a long time, however, scarcely a day passed without some one asking Peter why he risked his life. Almost invariably his reply was: "You'd better ask Rosie."

But young Mrs. Grey kept her own counsel. She, however, had to bear a great deal of chaffing whenever Pat Kelly chanced to visit Allerton.

ASHMORE RUSSAN.

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THE MASTER OF THE STEAM.

A ROUGH board shanty served as a railway station at Barranca, New Mexico. Within, the station-master was taking a siesta upon a couch draped with bright coloured Navajo blankets.

The station-master raised himself on his elbow. The face of an old Indian, seamed and wrinkled, was peering in the open doorway.

In good Spanish he asked to see the "head man" of the "iron-way." Then he told the object of his visit.

He was a chief of the Jicarilla Apaches, whose reservation was forty miles distant. He had heard his tribesmen tell wonderful stories of the great iron-way that the white man had made through the land, and of the fiery monster that flew along its trail. He did not believe all the tales they told. He had come to learn if these tales could be true.

It was almost time for the arrival of the express train on its way to Espanola. While awaiting its coming the station-master tried to explain to the Apache how the engine drew the carriages along the rails, but the old man either did not understand or did not believe him, for he shook his head and smiled incredulously.

"*Por Dios!*" ejaculated the savage, with a sudden start, as the shrill whistle of an approaching locomotive broke the silence, and in a moment more the "demon of the iron-way" came tearing round a curve with its four passenger carriages sweeping gracefully behind.

The old Apache took a position a safe distance from the line. Whatever his fears, he made a brave effort to master them. He was more than astonished—he was awe-stricken. He gazed with a bewildered expression at the great monster, now come to a stop at the station.

Down from the engine came the driver, a dumpy little fellow with a long-necked oil-can in his hand.

"*Santa Maria!*" gasped the savage nervously, clasping his hands, "the Master of the Steam!"

His eyes followed every movement of the driver; they shone with the light of adoration. So far as he knew, this was the only engine in the world, and this man the only master of it.

With two shrill whistles, which startled the Indian, the engine and its carriages glided out of the station and sped downward to the entrance to Embudo Cañon.

The Apache tarried with the station-master. He watched the train until a curve lost it to sight, and listened until its last echo died away.

Two weeks had passed, and the Apache had come again to see the "Master of the Steam." The station-master explained to him that the driver would not pass that day, but that he would go by in the night; that unless there were people to go in the carriages, "the steam" would not stop there at night. The savage without a word departed, slowly and sadly.

The moon shone full and clear on the New Mexico mesa, and the parallel bands of steel that marked the course of civilisation's roadway gleamed in the bright light. Above Barranca Station—almost within sight of it—was a small clump of trees, towards which two men were riding at a swift gallop. When they had arrived and dismounted one of them said:

"Climb that telegraph pole quickly, and cut the wire. there is no time to lose."

"We should have been here half an hour ago," said the first speaker. "I never got lost before cutting through the divide. Now take this crowbar and pry a rail loose; I'll swing the lantern, and if they don't stop we'll ditch 'em; if they do, why, they can fix the rail in a minute and go on."

"How much money do you think they've aboard?"

"I don't know exactly; there's $50,000 (£10,000) for the First National Bank of Sante Fé—that I know they've got, and that's enough for us if we get it."

The man who had received the order took the crowbar and approached the lines. He raised the bar and brought it down with force beside the rail. Just then there was a hissing, singing sound, as if some huge insect had suddenly flown towards them, and the man with the bar fell to the ground, full length across the lines. An arrow was buried deep in his breast.

It was a rash thing for his companion to do, but he was a desperate and an impulsive man. His six-shooter flashed in the moonlight, and he fired into the brush, in the direction from which the arrow had come. He listened intently. He heard a groan and started across the line. The shrill scream of a locomotive's whistle startled him. He stopped for an instant, and then started towards his horse. He grabbed the big pommel of his Mexican saddle to swing himself into the seat.

As he cleared the ground, the hissing, singing sound was repeated. An arrow grazed his leg and struck his horse in the stomach. With a snort the animal jumped aside, and the man fell heavily to the ground. The pained beast with the arrow in his side began to kick, and one blow from his heels fell upon the leg of the man. He uttered an imprecation and tried to gain his feet, but the effort was too great. His leg was broken. When he fell from his horse he dropped his six-shooter. He tried to crawl to where it lay, but the slightest effort made him cry out in agony.

The headlight of the engine added but little to the brightness of the scene as the great iron mogul came into view. The dumpy little driver was leaning out of the window. Suddenly he withdrew his head, reversed his engine, and applied the brakes.

"What's the matter?" asked the stoker.

"Man on the lines," was the laconic answer.

The injured man, with his revolver a dozen feet away, the dead man on the lines with an arrow in his breast, and a crowbar beside him, the lantern in the bushes, the picketed horse, instantly made clear the fact that a proposed train robbery had met with fatal interference. As the officials stood beside the injured robber, who refused to speak, a deep groan came from the bush on the opposite side of the line. They cautiously advanced in that direction. Lying behind a little clump of brush was an Indian. The breast of his cotton shirt was red with blood. In his left hand he clutched a stout bow and in his right hand was an arrow.

The driver bent over him and recognised him. It was the old Jicarilla Apache.

The light of recognition shone in the dying man's eyes. As the driver raised the Indian's head from the ground, a smile passed over the brown face of the savage. His lips moved:

"The Master of the Steam" he said, and died.

RICHARD LINTHICUM.

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ANACOANA

THE residence of some forty renegades among the simple natives of the fertile plain of Xaragua, to the west of Hispaniola, produced a marked effect on the mode of life of the untutored aborigines. Their chieftainess, Anacoana, actuated in part by a strong partiality for the manners and customs of the white strangers, and in part by the quick recognition of the advantages to be derived from adopting what was best in those manners, encouraged the building of houses like the Spanish domiciles, and a more orderly system of tillage than her indolent subjects had hitherto practised.

For herself she had constructed a residence modelled after the Governor's "palace" at San Domingo, with a fort attached, but unfortunately lacking in the same means of defence as the stronghold of the strangers. She dressed in the fashion of the Spanish women, too, and gave rich strings of pearls and gold utensils in exchange for gaudy garments, which she further ornamented with her favourite dyed feathers.

Anacoana was but a girl when Roldan and his disaffected followers revolted against Don Bartholomew, the brother of Columbus, whom the explorer had left as adelantado of the island, and who came among her father's people outraging the inoffensive and devastating their peaceful valley. Her heart was filled with hate for them, whether they might be gods or demons, and one or other men who could call down thunderbolts to strike their opponents dead must surely be.

But when Columbus returned to the island and restored tranquillity to the colony and relieved the unfortunate natives of most of their oppression, she accompanied her father on a visit to the "Great Chief." The sight of his gentle face or the kind words he spoke to her father softened her towards Columbus, and when he took her on his knee and told her of all the wonders of that other land so far away, whence he came, she was completely captivated, and for ever after during her life she cherished the memory of that one interview as sacred.

But about forty of the mutineers, gaol-birds, and adventurers, who left their country for their country's good, refused the amnesty offered by Columbus, and preferred to remain, leading the life of indolence which was made possible by the chief's having assigned them lands and natives to till it. Anacoana saw how her people were compelled to work by the Spaniards, and when she succeeded her father she exerted her authority to make the rest of the tribe labour for themselves.

Anacoana had been *cacique* for four years when she determined to pay a visit to the Spanish governor, Nicholas de Ovando, in the hope of inducing him to interfere and discipline the renegades, who were becoming more and more troublesome. When she entered the audience chamber, where the Knight of Alcantara sat in state to receive her, a murmur of admiration passed among the assembled officers, and even the eyes of the governor lighted up for a moment. Quickly remembering the dignity of his office, Ovando resumed the stern look he was accustomed to wear. Anacoana was then about twenty-four years old, tall and stately, her lithe figure moving with a native grace.

She entered the audience chamber.

Momentary as Ovando's glance of admiration had been it did not pass unnoticed by one interested spectator. This was Christina de la Rosa, Ovando's beautiful cousin, who occupied the seat of honour among the group of ladies in the audience chamber. A warm flush overspread her face, and if hate could kill, the swift glance she gave

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Anacoana would have struck her dead. Christina soon recovered her composure, and only the supercilious curling of her lip and a slight quivering of her nostrils betrayed her jealousy.

Ovando, beneath his expression of stern, unbending dignity, hid sensations which fully justified that jealousy. In turn his state and authority impressed Anacoana. Although he had not the kindly aspect of Columbus, he was immeasurably superior in her eyes to any of the men of her own race. As she advanced to the foot of the daïs, Ovando arose, and held out his hand for her to kiss. She bowed low and gracefully touched her lips to the great sapphire in the ring he wore as token of his authority.

When she raised her head again the colour in her face was deeper, her large, dark brown eyes glistened with a wild, passionate light, and a proud smile hovered about her mouth. In clear musical tones she stated the object of her visit, and cited instances in proof of her grievance. Ovando listened attentively, and when she had finished, stepped from the daïs, and taking her by the hand escorted her to a vacant seat on his right, while the head men who accompanied her presented further proofs of the rapacity and outrage of the renegades.

What pride was hers as she sat there in simple dignity! What jealousy raged in the heart of Dona Christina as she was forced to look upon this mark of honour to the beautiful barbarian!

Ovando promised to investigate fully the complaints. A strict disciplinarian, with a talent for holding in check the unruly adventurers who formed the rank and file of the Spanish colony, he desired only an opportunity to punish and bring to subjection the renegades in Anacoana's province.

II.

WHEN Anacoana and her suite had departed Ovando retired to the large apartment which served as parlour, library, and study. He had been there only a few minutes when Christina entered. So absorbed was he in thought as he sat at a table covered with books and papers, and so softly did she tread, that he did not notice her approach until her mocking laugh, as she peeped over his shoulder and discovered him tracing abstractedly a rude outline sketch of Anacoana's profile, recalled him from his reverie. With an involuntary movement he turned over the sheet of paper on which he had been drawing.

"You need not turn the page, my lord," she laughed, "since I already know the path your truant thoughts have taken."

Ovando frowned.

"What do you mean, Christina?" he demanded.

"What do I mean? The keen and penetrating Don Nicholas de Ovando, accustomed as he is to read men's minds himself, forgets that his own thoughts may also be read in his face—or in spite of it. I suppose the poor untutored savage queen, as she goes on her way homeward rejoicing, has before her mind the image of the great and grand Governor of Hispaniola and Knight of Alcantara just as he has her image before his eyes and tries to transfer it to paper. Yes, she has fine eyes, and is unusually pretty for a savage, but I never suspected that such charms could influence you in a matter of duty."

Ovando was furious, and his eyes flashed with rage.

"How dare you," he cried, rising. "impute an improper motive to me in your jealousy?"

Christina looked him straight in the face and did not flinch. She was somewhat pale, but her nostrils quivered with scorn.

"How dare I?" she asked. "How dare you in my presence play the gallant to this barbaric belle? How dare you add another indignity to the many you have heaped on me? Years ago you tempted me to fly my father's house to wed with you only to find no priest in waiting. To tempt me to this wilderness you vowed that once here, away from the world's scrutiny, you would make me your wife, and yet I am compelled to pose as your cousin. On every face I can see the scorn which the people dare not express, and I can almost hear the echo of their mocking laughter. And now a tawny savage has ensnared your fickle, treacherous heart, and you ask me how I dare to notice it.

Ovando raised his clenched hand threateningly, but Christina stood calmly and scornfully with curled lips still gazing in his bronzed and grizzled countenance.

"Ovando," she said in a suppressed tone. "You are not the passionate poltroon to strike a woman."

The Knight of Alcantara bit his lip, and his arm dropped listlessly by his side.

"You are right," he said, "it would be cowardice to strike you, however great the temptation. But do not attempt to dictate to me. If I look with lover's eyes on Anacoana, it is only a wife that has the right to object, and you have not that right."

"So you admit your infatuation and mock me! You forget how dangerous a woman can be. How long do you suppose the King would retain you in the Governorship of Hispaniola if I told my story?"

"Peace, peace," said Ovando. "Your jealousy needs curbing. I have only promised Anacoana that justice shall be done and that the renegades who are committing outrages against her people shall be punished."

"But you have not heard yet what they have to say. You cannot forget the cunning of these savage people, who are not notable for truth telling."

"No; I will do nothing till I have made a full investigation," said Ovando, "and then, pretty eyes, neither yours nor Anacoana's will influence me in seeing that justice is done."

"Strict justice is all I want, my lord; above all justice to myself."

With a low courtesy, Christina left the room.

Ovando lost no time in beginning his inquiry. One of his lieutenants was dispatched to the Spanish settlement in Xaragua, to report on the complaints of the natives. The reply of the renegades was a complete denial of the accusations, coupled with a counter-charge to the effect that Anacoana contemplated a treacherous descent on San Domingo and a massacre of the colony, and having failed to enlist the services of Roldan's former followers against their countrymen, desired to have them removed from that part of the island, so that her plans for the massacre could be completed without espionage.

This was pleasing information for Christina, as it was galling for Ovando. The idea of possible treachery on the part of Anacoana had never presented itself. On mature consideration of the state of affairs he was disposed to reject the report as malicious, and made in a spirit of revenge.

Christina soon learnt the result of the investigation, and was quick to appreciate how she could use it to her own advantage. She waited for several days to see whether Ovando would take any action, or speak to her concerning his lieutenant's report; but when he made

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no movement she shrewdly suspected that he either disbelieved what the renegades had said, or, from a motive which she understood, intended to await the course of events. Therefore, she perceived that it was necessary for her to speak, and that no time was to be lost.

It was in one of Ovando's moments of unbending. He lay stretched on a couch of Moorish workmanship, covered with heavy fur rugs, reading one of the popular Spanish romances dealing with knightly chivalry. Christina reclined on an ottoman at the other side of the apartment, her arms hanging loosely over the edge of the cushion, and the piece of lace which she had been engaged in working had fallen to the floor.

"Hernandez is returned," she said suddenly, "but my lord has not informed me what he reports."

Ovando looked up, somewhat disconcerted.

"It is unusual for you to take an interest in official matters," he said sharply.

"Oh, but you must remember that my interest in this particular affair was already excited," laughed Christina imperturbably.

"Your jealousy was also excited, I remember," said Ovando.

Christina started as if stung, and her olive skin flushed.

"And good reason there was for my jealousy," she cried, "when the harsh, unbending Nicholas de Ovando's thoughts were so completely captivated by the charms of a savage beauty."

Ovando ground his teeth.

"Hecate! Fury!" he hissed. "What do you want me to do?"

"Nothing but what you have sworn to your King and Queen to do—your duty."

"And my duty is——?"

"March to Xaragua and punish Anacoana and her people."

"But they have given no overt evidence of any intention to act treacherously."

"Are you going to wait for them to begin the massacre?" sneered Christina.

They were interrupted by the arrival of a messenger in such haste that his business could not wait. He was allowed to enter, and presented a dispatch to the governor. When Ovando read it, the expression on his face denoted that the contents were unpleasant.

"Say that I will give the matter instant attention," he said, dismissing the attendant. "And you," he said, turning to Christina, "leave me alone, I have important business to consider."

Christina retired silently. She knew what the important business was that required attention, for she herself had concocted the dispatch, which purported to give further details of the preparations being made by the Xaraguans to massacre the colony of San Domingo.

Ovando, though somewhat perturbed by the receipt of this information, determined to send spies to Anacoana's town and await more trustworthy news of the doings of the natives before marching against them. He foresaw that in pursuing this course he would experience a good deal of difficulty in dealing with Christina, but he was resolved to resist her threats.

III.

THE next day a messenger arrived from Anacoana bearing presents of gold and curiously wrought feather work, accompanied by an invitation to attend the annual native festival, which was about to take place. Christina smiled triumphantly when she heard of this.

"And what does my lord now think of these guileless children of nature?" she asked, entering his study.

"That the renegades are lying," he answered promptly.

Christina laughed aloud.

"Ovando was not always so unsuspecting," she said. "This is the first time that he was ever on the point of walking with open eyes straight into a trap."

"That the renegades are lying," he answered promptly.

But the Knight of Alcantara had no intention of allowing himself to become the victim of treachery, and made his preparations accordingly. When he set forth for Xaragua next day, seventy horsemen followed him. Christina rode on a palfrey by Ovando's side, and chatted merrily. All her ill-humour seemed to have departed, and she told the knight that the presence of the soldiers banished all her fears of treachery. The journey occupied six days, and as, towards sundown, the cavalcade sighted the orderly village, Anacoana came out to greet Ovando. She was attended by a score of maidens, each decked with flowers, and carrying great quantities of flowers to strew in the path of the Spaniards.

The chieftainess had the place of honour a short distance in front of her attendants, and danced not ungracefully a native dance of welcome, which consisted less in the movement of the feet than in the rhythmical swaying of the arms above her head, and a sinuous movement of her lithe body in unison therewith. At the same time Anacoana and the maidens sang in rude measure the praises of the Spaniards, their valour, and their mighty power.

The soldiers pitched their tents outside the village, but Ovando, Christina, and their personal guard of five were conducted to Anacoana's residence, and the chieftainess herself waited upon them until Ovando directed her to desist. She knelt as though she would have kissed his feet, but the Knight of Alcantara gently raised her up and kissed her on either cheek. Christina smiled, and gave the delighted chieftainess a similar salute.

Christina could not help noticing with what chivalrous tenderness Ovando treated Anacoana, and how plainly the chieftainess betrayed a passion, which she strenuously endeavoured to conceal. Still, the Spanish woman

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gave no sign of displeasure. On the morning of the third day Ovando was awakened by her from a heavy sleep, and told that a messenger had come to see him. The new-comer proved to be one of Bovadilla's men. When shown into Ovando's presence he knelt on one knee and said:

"Save yourselves, Excellency, while there is time. To-day the Spaniards are to be massacred, and last night Anacoana sent to ask us to assist her warriors to annihilate you."

"What nonsense to talk of treachery!" he cried. "Why, we could annihilate the village in half an hour, even if taken by surprise. I fear no treachery, and in the two days that we have been here nothing has occurred to cause any misgivings. This is to be the last day of our stay. If any danger threatened a signal is already arranged, and once it is given not a soul will be left of all the tribe. But no danger is likely to arise, and so the Spanish ensign will remain in its present position over the canopy."

The last words filled Christina's soul with joy. There was a signal, then, of terrible import.

That day was to wind up the native games, following which the Spaniards were to exhibit their agility, prowess, and military training. Simple indeed—foot-racing, wrestling and spear-throwing of Anacoana's people, but she was happy because Ovando took such interest in the games. A tender light filled her eyes, a light far different from that in Christina's, when she would discover the young chieftainess glancing with stealthy coyness at the Spanish Governor, and when so discovered the hot blood would suffuse her swarthy countenance and her bright eyes be veiled beneath the long silky lashes. And sometimes Ovando would glance at her, making no concealment of his admiration now.

The Xaraguan games were soon finished. Then came the turn of the Spaniards. They began with a military drill and went through the evolutions of the period with the skill of trained campaigners. The whole body formed into a double line, and at the word advance, running with such regular step that it seemed to be the movement of one man. Suddenly they broke ranks, and as sabres flashed and the nearest of the natives were cut down there was a wild cry from the panic-stricken Xaraguans.

Ovando himself was horrified. A glance round slowly showed him Christina standing with her hand on the rope which had hoisted the ensign and given the signal for massacre, her lips parted in a diabolical smile, and a look of murderous triumph in her eyes. Anacoana stood up, too, trembling in every limb, unable to articulate from terror and indignation. Ovando shouted a command for the massacre to cease, but his words were lost in that appalling din where the cries of murdered men, women, and children ascended to heaven for vengeance.

Christina released her hold on the rope as Ovando's eye fell on her. Worse than the tigress, because capable of a thousand times more mischief, her thirst for blood, so far from being satiated or assuaged, was only excited. Her hand sought her girdle, and the jewelled dagger which was drawn forth, was buried next moment in the heart of Anacoana. The body of the chieftainess sank at Ovando's feet, and not a murmur escaped her. Ovando seized Christina in his powerful grasp, while the massacre went on about him.

None was spared, the babe at its mother's breast, or those whom the grave already claimed as its prey. Nearly every Xaraguan wore one or more gold ornaments, and soon as the fatal blow was struck, the greedy murderers pillaged the dead of their glittering trinkets. It was the instinct of the Spaniard to do so. It was the greed of gold that first led them there. Ovando was unable to stay the murder and pillage now that it had begun, and he did not heed it longer. It was with Christina he had to deal.

As he held her blood-stained wrist he cried with a dreadful oath:

"Fiend incarnate, why have you done this?"

Her lip curled as she cast a look of hate on the corpse of Anacoana at their feet.

"Because she loved you—and you loved her," she replied.

With all his maddened strength he drove the dagger in her own clenched hand through her breast, and then flung the quivering body into the field. Then he glanced down on Anacoana where she lay lifeless. The fiendish look on his bronzed face relaxed and slowly melted into one of love and pity. The lip of him who had never blanched amidst the horrors of a dozen campaigns now trembled, and a slight sigh escaped him.

Then he knelt down and began to strip the body of its gold ornaments and jewels.

JAMES DUFFY.

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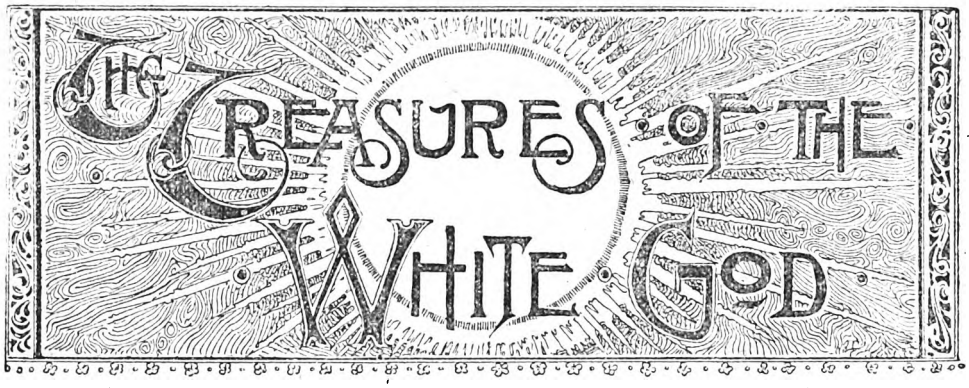

SUMMARY.

ROBERT LANE, escaped convict No. 407, *alias* Adrian Burgoyne is tracked to the World's Fair Grounds at Chicago. He is last seen, after an exciting chase by Mr. Inspector Grey and his assistant, Detective Dean, locked in a burning boat on the lake. Detective Dean finds a cipher in the convict's bed, which he sells to Mr. Richard Sheldon for £2,000. A Col. Lytle calls on Sheldon. They recall Burgoyne's history as follows: Ralph Ringold, when dying in Mexico, left a packet containing £6,000 in the hands of Burgoyne for his friend Richard Sheldon, whom he appointed guardian of his daughter Patrice's fortune. Burgoyne overheard Lytle and Sheldon arranging to appropriate the treasure, and threatened to expose them. They caused him to be convicted of a crime, and sentenced to penal servitude for life.

They then discovered, when too late, that he had with him in cipher the secret to Ralf Ringold's hidden fortune and treasures in Mexico.

The cipher is now in their possession, but Patrice Ringold has the key.

Adrian Burgoyne escapes from the burning boat. He meets with a severe accident, which disfigures him beyond identity.

Richard Sheldon visits Patrice to obtain the key to the cipher. This, however, she had dropped the day before on the cliff, with her Bible. She hastens off to find it.

She falls over the cliff, but is rescued by Adrian Burgoyne. Startled by the sudden sight of Col. Lytle, he himself loses his balance and falls. He checks himself, however, and discovers the lost Bible of Patrice.

CHAPTER XII.

PATRICE.

PATRICE RINGOLD! What did it mean? Could he believe his eyes? Fate, an omen, delusion? As the worn, hunted refugee traced the letters forming that name, he forgot who he was, what he had been.

Like a signal to a ship passing in the arms of the storm, a blaze of sudden light down a dark abyss, that name, a key to all he had guessed, marvelled over, surmised, seemed to illumine his heart—unlocked all the portentous mysteries of the past, bade him hope that light, solution, the truth, was to dawn at last.

He was transformed in the radiance it shed, in the strong reliance it offered. He rose to his feet, palpitating, revived. He was no longer the crushed convict, the beaten victim. There awoke in his thoughts the most extravagant soul of hope, and he murmured five gasping words, with a thrill of conviction, faith, and triumph.

"The hand of Providence—fate!"

Patrice Ringold! There was her name, this was her book. There could be no doubt of that. "From her loving mother." And its owner? With a memory of the thrill that had possessed his being as, hanging over the dizzy abyss at the cliff, her eyes met his own, he seemed to grope for some lost, long-past recognition. He knew the woman he had saved now!

"*His* daughter—the orphan child of my dead friend, Ralph Ringold," breathed Burgoyne fervently. "And I saved her life. Oh, fate sent me hither. The girl I have sought, dreamed of, longed to see—the child I was sworn to protect and cherish—I meet her here. In the hour of my resurrection from the dead, on the threshold of a new existence—what does it mean—a gleam of hope, a harbinger of success!"

He sat staring at the name. The rain had blurred it, the damp had already curved and injured the covers to the little Bible. As it began to dry out now, the pasted back cracked loose from the body of the book. The inside leaves alone were intact. Reverently and thoughtfully the dreamer placed them in his pocket, and toyed with and stared at the cover in his hand, as if the name written there had magic to fix his bewildered thoughts, and inspire them to mighty, decisive action.

An hour ago he had seen the shadow of the past loom over him again, a drawn sword of menace—had supposed that, in view of the proximity of Lytle, flight to the uttermost parts of the earth was his portion, his choice, his doom.

Now——

The instincts of courage, rectitude, resolve, strong in his earnest nature to heroism, awoke anew. To carry out the dying wishes of Ralph Ringold he had undergone peril, persecution; to preserve his secret he had become a martyr. All through his years of penal servitude one thought, one grim, bitter resolve, had buoyed him up with hope—a determination to escape, to avenge the wrongs of the dead, of the orphan against the human harpies who had robbed the one of his fortune, the other of her happiness and the comfort and wealth rightfully her own.

But when he had escaped; when he had realised how subtle were the groping hands of justice; how implacable and steadfast and secure in their strong, self-reliant position were his enemies; how futile seemed his efforts to prove aught hostile to them, to reach them, to dislodge, to unmask them; he had been almost content to abandon the unequal contest, to court recapture no longer, to redeem the wasted years for his own benefit, and forget the solemn trust he had tried to execute, and in so doing had met peril, persecution, and imprisonment.

But now! ah! the lost was found, the long quest was ended. She whom he had sought, she whom he had sworn to protect, was known. He had found Patrice Ringold—at last!

What did that mean? As he recalled the pathetic scene where Ralph Ringold had died in his arms, murmuring the name of his beloved child; as he remembered how he had promised to see every injunction regarding her faithfully carried out; as he thought of the plots of the unfaithful steward, Richard Sheldon, the man who had suffered for his convictions turned his face once more resolutely, dauntlessly, back towards the Calvary upon which his proudest hopes had been crucified.

Patrice!—she was everything. She had lost her rightful fortune; but what was wealth to peace, security, happiness? Better that she should go forth, as he was going,

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beggared, homeless, an outcast, than that she should remain in the power, under the shadow, of the cunning, the intrigue of the wolf, Sheldon, and his hyæna-like accomplice, Lytle.

Yes, his duty was plain. His pledge to the dead, and the influence of the bonny wild-rose face that had perforce nestled against his own the evening previous, spurred him on to vivid resolve. She should be found again—told all. She should be removed, as a brand from the burning, to a safe retreat. The blighting, hateful influence of those two heartless plotters should never shadow her purity of soul as it had blighted her prospects. That first—the girl safe, for she was menaced. Of that there can be no doubt; for was not the man who had addressed her as a friend her worst secret enemy—Colonel Lytle?

What were the present plots of the schemers. Why was Lytle here? Why were they not content with robbing the orphan, and condemning her to a life of poverty and obscurity?

These questions Adrian Burgoyne could not answer, but the points involved he determined to speedily learn.

"They appropriated her fortune," he mused; "they provided her with a humble home somewhere near here, as I have now learned for the first time; but why is that man Lytle here? Is some new plot against this trustful, innocent creature on foot? It must be so, or—ah! can it be that they have learned of my supposed death—that, failing to secure from me the secret concerning the hiding-place of the greater bulk of Ralph Ringold's fortune, they are hopeful of gaining some information from her? What matters it? They never will learn. I, and I alone, hold the secret. No matter what they design, no matter what complications exist, I must see Patrice; I must reveal the true villainy of these men to her. I must induce her to fly to a place of safety. Then——"

His pale face flushed, his eyes glowed like two scintillating sparks of light. Then?—aye! the debt he owed these ruffians should be paid to the very last farthing! The hidden fortune!—his should be the hand to unearth it—the stolen fortune! Wily as a serpent, cunning as a fox, implacable, tireless, he would yet run these scoundrels to earth and strip them of their pilfered trappings, and for golden chains of luxury exchange the grim, rusted iron bars of the baleful prison.

Justice! His soul cried aloud for it, but first, protection for the unprotected, safety for the innocent, a clear field, right pitted against might, a battle to the death, and, in the end, who knew? The Book promised it; light might break at eventide, and he might forget his money, as waters that pass away!

The man was inspired as he rose to his feet. Freedom, blessed boon! was his. Experience had taught him caution. Aimlessly, mechanically, crushing the distorted book cover in his hand, he rose to his feet, and prepared to leave the spot.

"To evade Lytle, if he really is on my track," he formulated rapidly; "to find the girl I rescued, Patrice Ringold; to reveal the truth to her, to induce her to leave the remotest proximity to her enemies——"

He paused, and drew back into his covert, as voices fell upon his hearing.

Crouching, he listened. Two men were passing along the fence outside.

"And had only trouble for our pains," one of them was saying.

"Eh? hardly; we was paid, weren't we?" demanded the other.

"Yes, but the fellow who hired us didn't make much out of the operation."

"You mean the Colonel, as he calls himself?"

"Aye. Seems to me he must think a deal of a simple book to have us searching up and down the cliff half the night—searching for a lost Bible."

"Well, I guess he's interested in the pretty young lady up at Mrs. Loring's cottage."

"Oh! Miss Ringold?"

"Exactly. It were her Bible that she lost he was so anxious to find. Mebbe he's spooney on her, and wanted to show her his devotion, and all that, by finding the book."

The two men passed out of hearing. With a poorly-suppressed cry of mingled relief and enlightenment, Adrian Burgoyne sprang from his covert.

"Oh, the good fortune of it!" he exclaimed jubilantly. "Lytle was not seeking for me at all. Those are the men he had with the ropes at the cliff. They were not looking for me, but for a book, and the girl was Patrice, and she is living at the home of a Mrs. Loring. I can find her readily. I am safe to appear publicly. But why should Lytle go to all the trouble he did for a little book—this very Bible, I am sure?"

Perplexed and thoughtful, Burgoyne stepped through the break in the fence, and walked down the path leading by it.

The two men had disappeared, and a short distance away he saw the spires and chimneys of the little town of Lynde.

Inspecting the coverless Bible, he turned its pages over and over, wondering if the little volume could have any particular value for Patrice or Lytle, save as a cherished memento by the former.

He placed it in his pocket, reflecting that its return to Patrice would pave the way for the interview he meditated. Then, just as he crossed the playground of a district school, he carelessly flung away the crumpled and wet cover of the Bible.

"My course is simple," he cogitated. "I must evade Lytle as much as possible. I do not think he would recognise me, but I must be very cautious. As to Patrice—ah! if it should be as the villager hinted, that Lytle is in love with her, that he has so imbued her mind with his respectability and friendly interest that she would not credit my story? No! no! I will not lose heart. Circumstances shall guide me. First, to find the home of this Mrs. Loring; then to see Patrice privately. From her I may be able to learn the status of the plot of Lytle."

Burgoyne entered the village, secured a meal at a restaurant, and arranged his disordered attire at a mirror.

He smiled confidently as he realised what fire and flood had done for him in the way of disguise, yet a slight twinge of regret afflicted his mind as he reflected, too, that his personal appearance was not of a grade likely to attract a young lady. He looked "peculiar"—that word just expressed it—and yet a thrill of satisfaction gave him new courage as he remembered that Patrice Ringold had not shrunk from him in that terrible clamber for life or death up the steep sides of the river cliff.

He was walking down the one business street of the town, when he turned his attention to a window filled with books, illustrated papers, and toys.

Just next door was a livery stable, and, engaged in conversation with its presumable proprietor, was the cause of Burgoyne's perturbation—Colonel Lytle.

The former had come almost face to face with him. In fact, as he halted, slightly dismayed, Lytle's keen eyes had swept face and form completely.

Under that dread cynosure the startled Burgoyne had trembled, but, with a powerful effort, he had turned to the show window, as if no deeper emotion than idle curiosity swayed his mind.

Had he been recognised—had the shrewd eyes of his enemy penetrated the mask of disguise?

No. The reflection of Lytle's face in the burnished window pane showed not a trace of surprise or intelligence. He was safe. Colonel Lytle adjudged him dead, and the change wrought by his recent adventures had given him an appearance entirely foreign to his original identity.

"You will have the carriage ready at ten, without fail?" Burgoyne heard Lytle say.

"Promptly."

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"Do not fail me. It is a matter of the greatest importance."

"At ten to-night, as you say, and a capable driver, equipped for a long drive."

"And a discreet one, who will appreciate double pay for keeping his ears shut and his eyes open," returned Lytle with a sinister smile, as he walked away.

At a safe distance Adrian Burgoyne shadowed him. His words had startled him. A carriage at midnight! What new plot was he contemplating?

Lytle proceeded to a cottage at the limits of the village, and near the river. Into it he vanished.

A few inquiries satisfied Burgoyne that it was the home of the girl he sought. More than that, he managed to engage a passer-by in general conversation, and deftly left the talk upon the subject of the inmates of the Loring cottage.

He learnt all he wished to know. Patrice had resided there for four years. A Mr. Sheldon, a reputed wealthy man, was a distant relative of Miss Ringold. He had never come to see her since sending her there. Out of sheer kindness of heart, he had provided for her. The Colonel was the man who had acted as his agent. This was his first appearance for four years in Lynde.

"Something is up," murmured Burgoyne convincedly, as he left the man and strolled on slowly. "What brings Lytle here just after my supposed death? What is the significance of the midnight carriage? How can I see Patrice? I dare not venture to the house; I must not arouse Lytle's remotest suspicions."

All through that day Burgoyne haunted the vicinity of the Loring cottage. Lytle came and went. Twice Burgoyne caught a fleeting glimpse of a fairy-like form flitting through the shrubbery, but ere he could get near enough to the grounds to make sure it was Patrice, the graceful presence had disappeared.

At dusk, however, he formulated a decisive plan. He felt sanguine that Lytle meditated some definite move that very night. Perhaps he intended removing Patrice to the city, to some more secluded and remote retreat. He must, he would, act within a few hours! Burgoyne was determined on that.

Dusk favoured a nearer approach to the cottage. He climbed the rear fence, and skirted the shrubbery in the garden, approaching the house cautiously and slowly.

It had a little wing comprising a single room. This apartment was used as a sitting-room, and here a light showed.

In its radiance he plainly made out the form of a man sprawling in an easy-chair, smoking a cigar and looking over some papers. It was Lytle.

In the kitchen Burgoyne discerned the mistress of the house, Mrs. Loring, putting away the supper dishes.

Where was Patrice? Anxiously the lurker scanned every window of the house; then he came round to its further side.

"Ah! it is she."

In a fervent gasp Burgoyne uttered the words, and, spell-bound, fixed his eyes on a window not twenty feet distant.

It was open, and partially covered with a delicate trailing vine. A lamp set on a stand revealed the interior of an apartment typically suggestive of the calm, peaceful, pastoral life led by its inexperienced occupant.

The snowy bed, the bright, cheery wall paper, the countless ornaments formed of flowers, leaves and shells, the neat dimity curtains tied back with a bit of blue ribbon, formed a glowing framework for the radiant creature who stood at that moment braiding her beautiful tresses as the finishing touch to a toilet neat and becoming as her surroundings.

The heart of the watcher thrilled at the loveliness that spoke eloquently in lip, cheek, and eye. Purity, innocence, simplicity won his loftiest tribute. For her sake, though all unknown to her, he had suffered five years of awful torture. But she was worthy of it; he did not regret it, if only those sweet, sympathetic lips could tell him: "I thank you. I revere you for your fidelity to the father I mourn and love."

Patrice tucked away a stray lock under the silver band that held her tresses as in a crown. Then, extinguishing the lamp, she came to the window, sat down there, and gazed calmly out at the star-spangled heavens, as if waiting, in tranquil reverie, some expected summons from her guest in the best room of the humble little house.

Adrian Burgoyne took a step nearer to the open window. How could he speak without startling her? Would he be allowed an uninterrupted interview of sufficient length to tell her all?

Earth, air, and sky were in harmony with placid reverie, rather than dark, stormy disclosures. It seemed almost a crime to disturb the even, unbroken course of that peaceful and innocent life.

He drew nearer and nearer. He could make out her sweet, earnest face plainly in the half light of the holy, tranquil stars. He could catch her breathing faintly. From her filmy hair-ribbons and the lace garniture at her snowy throat an odour of solemn sanctity seemed to float and permeate that night of sweet sounds, swaying his senses in loving tribute to so much innocence and beauty.

Adrian Burgoyne was at the window now. He reached forth his hand gently. He allowed it to fall upon the white, snowy one of the fair dreamer, whose eyes, uplifted, seemed communing with the angels at the gates of Heaven.

"Patrice," he said softly—"Patrice!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DAWN OF LOVE.

THE young girl uttered a quick, frightened cry, and shrank back timidly. Then something gentle though mandatory, persuasive though sudden, in the earnest clasp of the hand that rested across her own, checked the wild utterance of alarm arising involuntarily to her lips.

"Who is it?" she faltered. "I——"

"Do not cry out, I beg of you!" spoke Burgoyne agitatedly, in a low tone of voice, and gazing with apprehension towards the front of the house. "I have been waiting all day to see you, and——"

"Oh, I know you now."

The words burst unrestrainedly from the lips of Patrice. Interrupted, amazed, Burgoyne saw the beautiful face break into one radiant glow of ingenuous delight.

"You know me?" he repeated vaguely.

"Yes, oh, yes!" breathed his companion, with sparkling eyes, forgetting all her timid alarm, her true, womanly, sympathetic soul revealed. "Oh! my friend, my deliverer! Do you think I could ever forget? Do you think——"

She broke down there. More precious than the richest jewels to the longing, famished soul of the poor outcast, he saw the pearly teardrops, and his heart choked him with joy ineffable.

"I thought you were dead," she sobbed, but smiling. "Your sad end haunted me all day. I was praying for you here, just now. I was thinking of your noble sacrifice for me, an unknown girl, my brave deliverer—my friend, my dear, dear friend."

Patrice had sought his hand with both her own. She caressed it as might a sister. The flood gates of emotion were open, and she had not the art to dissimulate her true emotions.

"And you must come in now, at once. Mrs. Loring will want to see you, to thank you, and I—can I ever cease blessing you for what you have done for me?"

"Wait!" gasped Burgoyne, too overwhelmed until now to check the vivacious flow of gratitude. "Do not call anyone—do not speak so loud. My visit must be a secret one. Miss Ringold—Patrice—pardon me, but I must explain."

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She drew slightly away from him at his strange, impetuous words.

"Your visit a secret?" she faltered.

"Yes. Listen a moment. If I must be surreptitious, stealthy in my movements, there is a motive for it. I must speak to you here, now, at once, ere it is too late. No one must see me. Pardon the necessity of a clandestine meeting, but——"

"Do you think I mistrust you, blame you?" interrupted Patrice quickly. "No; only your strange words! What do they mean?"

He regarded her, his soul in his eyes. His voice quivered as he again addressed her.

"Patrice," he said, "you say I saved your life. If I place mine within your keeping—if I tell the woeful, shameful story for the first time to you of my broken, blighted life—if I disturb the calm, placid current of your happy young existence, will you forgive me and keep sealed lips?"

"I do not understand—I cannot comprehend!" stammered the girl, vaguely affrighted.

"Then, in a word I will explain. I dare not appear openly, because I am—an escaped convict!"

"You!"

Incredulity, shuddering distrust, lingered in the accents.

"Yes, more than that—a miserable, hunted fugitive; still more—the enemy, the victim, of the man who is your guest, your friend—nearer and dearer still, for all I know—Colonel Lytle."

His voice was almost a sob. The sad, direful necessity of the brutal revelation seared his soul.

With a shock the girl recoiled. The disclosure overwhelmed her.

"But—but innocent!" she gasped faintly. "Oh! I know you could not be a—a—*that!* You have suffered; your face tells me that. You are true, noble, manly. You are the man who saved my life!"

"And something more, Patrice," spoke Burgoyne impressively. "I am your dead father's friend; he died in my arms. He died imploring me to perform a sacred mission looking to your welfare. Listen."

She was silent now. So little of the sensational and startling had come into her life through the years of secluded girlhood that the overwhelming declaration of her strange visitor, gaining in force and intensity each moment, electrified, paralysed her.

In the eloquence of innocence vindicating itself, in the wild, pitiful accents of a martyr, a victim, Burgoyne spoke, and she listened. From first to last he told his tragic story. He saw her wonder-filled eyes glow, first with incredulity, and then slow-dawning confidence and trustfulness were succeeded by the luminous glow of filial affection and grief, as he depicted her father's sad demise. She shuddered at the sure revelation of the daring duplicity of Richard Sheldon and his ally; her face grew white as death over the recital of the cruel wrongs Burgoyne had suffered; she melted into womanly tears and true womanly pity as he told of the years of prison blight and torture.

"I believe you. For my sake, for my unworthy sake, you did all this? Oh! my friend, my deliverer!"

Her fair tresses swept his face as she clasped his hands in frantic emotion. Almost unmanned, he faltered. Then he implored her to calmness. The long but rapidly-told narrative was ended, her peril depicted, his plans of flight outlined.

The minutes had flown apace; a little clock inside had struck another hour. Still at the window he lingered, pouring into her ear the vivid story that seemed to awaken her like a shock from a peaceful, sunny dream.

Once, as the enormity of the crime of Richard Sheldon appalled her untutored senses, she seemed on the verge of fainting.

Once, too, at the thought of leaving her peaceful home and becoming a fugitive, an outcast, she shuddered.

A single realisation, however, of some sinister plot meditated by Lytle, a single glance at the earnest, resolute face of her champion, told Patrice Ringold that into his safe keeping she could trust her future, as to the watch and ward of her own brother.

It was strange, it was sudden, but so, evidently, too, would prove the next move of the plotters.

She listened with a wildly-beating heart to the revelation of Lytle's trickery. She must leave Lynde at once. She must not even bid her motherly friend, Mrs. Loring, goodbye. Burgoyne had sufficient money to convey her to a safe retreat. Then to formulate a plan for unmasking her enemies—for a search for the fortune hidden away in Mexico.

"I will come," she said, placing her hand confidingly in his own. "I am too stunned at all you have told me to act coherently. You must act for me. My father's friend, my rescuer, I place my life in your hands, and can only pray for you and bless you!"

Her eyes were swimming with pity for her wronged, forlorn champion.

"I think," she went on, more composedly at length, "that I can explain the object of this man Lytle's visit."

"You can?" murmured Burgoyne eagerly.

"Yes; in some way he or his employer has become possessed of a knowledge of the contents of the secret piece of parchment my father gave you—the cipher description of the hiding-place of his wealth."

"Impossible!" ejaculated Burgoyne.

"Then why did he come here to find the key?"

"The key?" repeated Burgoyne vaguely.

"Yes. He pretended when he came yesterday that he had discovered some old and useless documents among my dead father's papers. They wished to translate one of these. He asked me a number of mystifying questions, then he showed me a small piece of paper. Mr. Burgoyne, I am not mistaken. It bore the very same characters which you describe as being contained in the bit of parchment which you secreted through your long imprisonment—which Richard Sheldon so desired to secure."

Adrian Burgoyne looked worried, but he said with emphasis:

"It could not be; no one ever saw the parchment message, no one ever possessed it but myself—unless they have by accident stumbled over a copy of it, or—no! no! that secret is ours—ours alone; that secret is safe."

"And you still possess the parchment?" asked Patrice.

Adrian Burgoyne's face fell. He looked grave.

"No," he answered in a low tone. "I am sorry to say that I do not."

"Then——"

"I carried it for years. I had it safe in a bandage worn across my breast the night I was so nearly captured. That night I lost it. Falling off, sunk in the lake, destroyed by fire, given to the winds, of one thing I am certain—those knaves could by no possible circumstances have gained possession of it."

"But if you have lost it—the treasured, important clue to my father's hidden fortune," spoke Patrice earnestly—"how can you hope to ever find that wealth?"

"Do not fear," answered Burgoyne, with a mysterious smile. "I have provided against its loss."

"Ah, you have memorised the parchment message, then?" ventured Patrice, even amid the excitement and urgency of the moment betraying a woman's natural curiosity.

"No, I have—— But we must not waste time speaking of that now," said Burgoyne hurriedly. "There are more important themes to discuss. You were saying that Lytle asked you about a key to the cipher characters. You had one?"

"Yes." And Patrice explained that her father had been wont to correspond with her about the same.

"And the key you possessed?" queried Burgoyne eagerly.

"Was an alphabet that I had preserved. It was contained

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in my mother's little Bible. I kept it there—both mementoes of my dead parents."

"In the Bible?" exclaimed Burgoyne excitedly.

"Yes; I lost it, and this man Lytle was seeking to recover it all last night."

Burgoyne comprehended. In a flash his hand went to his breast pocket.

"I found that Bible when I fell over the cliff," he explained.

"You found it?" murmured the startled Patrice.

"Yes."

"Then you have it?"

"Here!"

Burgoyne produced the book in question.

"Yes," murmured Patrice, examining the Bible in the starlight. "It is the same book."

"And the cipher alphabet is somewhere in it?" queried Burgoyne excitedly. "I did not look through it, only casually. Oh! how fortunate. Find it, Patrice, quick! Then I can translate the message, and——"

"Why, Mr. Burgoyne!" faltered Patrice, "the cipher alphabet was written on a sheet of paper."

"Yes?"

"Folded up and secreted in a compartment in the back cover of the Bible."

Despite his caution, Burgoyne uttered a startled cry.

"In the cover?" he ejaculated in dismay.

"Yes. You found that, too."

"Yes, but the rain had soaked it and disfigured it. I threw the cover away."

"Threw—it—away!" gasped Patrice in a despairing tone of voice.

"Yes, never dreaming the truth. No! no! the loss is not serious, irredeemable. I remember distinctly where I cast it. I can certainly find it again."

"You think so?" murmured Patrice anxiously.

"I am positive of it, Patrice," spoke Burgoyne seriously. "We must waste no more time in talking now. I will hasten to the spot where I threw the Bible cover; will seek for it, find it, and return as speedily as possible. You will be ready then to accompany me?"

"Without fail," she replied staunchly.

"Where will I meet you?"

"At the little gate leading into the meadow."

"In one hour?"

"As you say. Wait one moment."

She extended a detaining hand as he was about to speed away on his mission.

Burgoyne came back to the window.

"What is it, Patrice?" he asked.

"If you find the alphabet——"

Still she hesitated, embarrassed.

"Yes?"

"And if it is really the key to the parchment message, you can translate it?"

"Most certainly."

"But you have lost the parchment?"

"That is true," admitted Burgoyne.

"Do you trust to your memory to recall the message?"

"No. You are curious, Patrice," smiled Burgoyne. "Well, I will tell you all. Fearing I might lose the parchment or be forced to destroy it, in order that it might not fall into the hands of Richard Sheldon I made a copy of it."

"A copy!" repeated Patrice, still curiously.

"Yes, an imperishable record," answered Adrian Burgoyne, a certain set, stern expression coming over his classic features.

"And you have that copy with you?"

"Always! It is here!"

As he spoke, Adrian Burgoyne described a singular movement. It was to extend one arm; with the other he bared it until the firm, sinewy member showed clear up to the elbow, white as snow, in contrast to the acid-stained hand and wrist.

Across the forearm was a legend in blue, indelible ink—an array of symbolic characters exactly similar to those contained in the famous parchment message.

"Tattooed there," exclaimed Burgoyne. "It was painful; it was a laborious task, but——"

Repaid? Oh, tenfold!—a hundred-fold repaid—for, the tears of pity and appreciation welling in her beautiful eyes. Patrice Ringold leant suddenly forward.

Her eyes gazed on the chronicle of pain and fidelity, as if her heart went utterly forth to meet his own, at this final evidence of his sterling courage and resolution.

"For my poor sake—all for me!" she sobbed. "Oh, my friend, my champion, my hero, *I adore you!*"

(To be continued.)

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"Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled, 'Corpulency, and the Cure' (256 pages), and is a cheap issue (only 6d), published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Our space will not do justice to this book; send for it yourself. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes: "Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid: 'My son, Count——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos—*i.e.*, 34lbs.' Another writes: 'So far (six weeks from the commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes: 'I am just half the size.' A fourth: 'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8lbs. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes: 'A reduction of 18lbs. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes: 'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again, a lady says: 'It reduced me considerably, not only in the body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says: 'Step on a weighing-machine on Monday morning and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee that you have lost 2lbs. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations.'"—*Cork Herald.*

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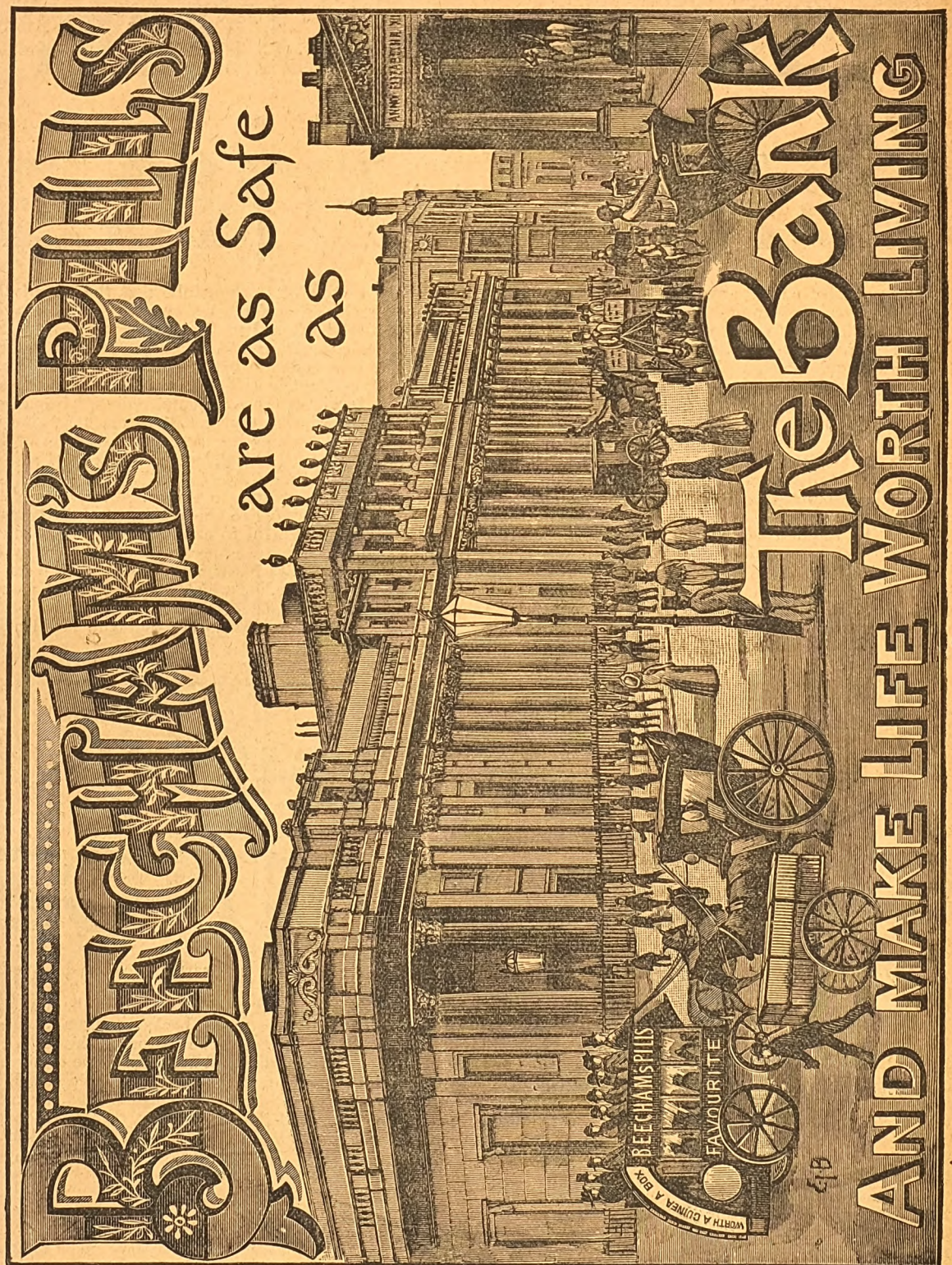

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THIRTY-TWO PAGES. ONE PENNY.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 368. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 18TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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Jan. 18, 1896.
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No 368.—One Penny. January 18, 1896.

SHORT STORIES

ONE BLIND EYE.

DAWN was gradually spreading over the city—a cheerless midwinter dawn, begriming everything it touched.

In his studio Dockery coughed, and tucked his blanket closer round him on the lounge. The air was heavy with the damp chill of a room long untenanted, and its few bare furnishings, most of which were hardly unpacked, proved that their owner had but lately taken possession.

A torn shade dangled from the skylight. A sheet of dark crayon paper, left by some previous occupant, was pasted over a stove-pipe hole above the mantelpiece, and, like the rest of the fittings, it had gathered a coating of dust. A sooty, unused fireplace was below, with an empty grate, a dusty hearth, and a new bundle of firewood. Dockery had bought the firewood a week before, and being unable to afford more, was keeping this until luck should change or until he should positively need a fire.

All the unpacked canvases in the room were ranged face against the wall, whilst others lay in unpicturesque rolls about the floor. Dockery had picked a framed picture up the evening before, intending to hang it somewhere, and then, remembering it as one which had been refused by the "Society," and feeling a fresh sense of discouragement at the recollection, had left the thing where he found it.

Decidedly it was too cold to sleep. He raised himself on his elbow and looked at the fireplace, then rose slowly and stiffly from the lounge and dressed.

A forlorn-toned city clock struck six.

Dockery stumbled about the studio awhile under a vague impression that such an exercise would warm him. Finally he gave it up; the dull confusion of his quarters was too depressing. Buttoning his frayed overcoat, and pulling his hat firmly over his forehead, he left the studio and stole softly down the uncarpeted staircase. There was no one to hear him save the porter's family in the basement, but the fear of disturbing the least soul had become a habit with Dockery. Perhaps it accounted for his own poor place in the race.

Clear, bracing sunlight brightened the world when Dockery returned, but, instead of going up to his studio as usual, the artist made his way down a dark little staircase which led to the basement, and stopped at the porter's door. He stood a moment fumbling in the breast-pocket of his coat, and then knocked.

The porter's wife came to the door. She was a sinewy little German woman, with tight curling, tumbled black hair, piercing black eyes, and the warmest heart in the world.

"I—a—," began Dockery, for his mission was a little awkward to explain, "I—ah——"

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"Vy, goot morning! Goot morning!" she interrupted heartily. "You vater ees froze? My Villiam 'as been at de pump dose fifteen minutes. He vill 'ave it all fix soon, you see."

"Oh, no," cried poor Dockery, "that's not it, but you see," and he wore the funniest shame-faced expression, as, stepping into the kitchen where a window or two gave light from the court, he held something out to her which he had been keeping against his coat.

"Vy, de leetle cat!" she exclaimed. "Mister Dockery, vere he come from?"

"Why, I found him in the street," explained Dockery, with symptoms of genuine pride in his tone. "Poor little chap was nearly frozen, but he seems better already. I haven't anything fit for kittens to eat upstairs, so I just stopped to see if I could get a little milk from you, and after this get you to take extra milk and sell me some. Do—do you think a pint would do?"

"Pint?" cried the little woman merrily. "Pint? Wat leeetle cat can do wid a pint of milk? I will ged him some. Dere ees blenty here. Come, pussie—come. Ze leetle pussie!"

Such a mite of a kitten, like an overgrown black caterpillar, cuddled in the hollow of her hand. She took it over to the window.

"Are his eyes open?" asked Dockery, following her eagerly. "Why, what's the matter?"

The woman had given a little scream. She was holding the kitten away from her by the nape of the neck.

"What is it?" repeated Dockery.

Still holding the kitten at arm's length, she simply pointed at its head, saying:

"Black—an' de blind eye!"

"Blind, is he?" said Dockery, coming closer to the curled-up mite which hung from between her forefinger and thumb. "Poor little chap. Let me see. Sure enough, his right eye is gone, but I warrant you this one will be sharp enough for two. Poor little chap! Now, if you'll just get me something to feed him out of, I'll take him along."

To himself Dockery acknowledged that he did not like the way she was holding it. But now the little woman stared at him in astonishment.

"You not goin' to keep him!" she cried at last. "You vill not bring de bad luck in de house? Eet ees not goot de black cat wid blind eye to keep. No, no. Ve put him vere he vas."

"Oh, no," said Dockery. "Give him to me. He will be all right. I couldn't let him stay out in this weather, you know. When it grows warmer, perhaps——"

She let him take the kitten, and spreading her palms

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outwards, signified that she washed her hands of the whole affair. A moment later she shook her head distrustfully, murmuring:

"I no got use for de blind eye in a cat dat ees black. He bring trouble in your house. Eet ees de sure sign."

But her interest in this solitary lodger moved her to comply with his desire for something to feed his kitten from, and although she protested to the last moment, Dockery went up to his studio bearing with him a tin cup, an old teaspoon, and a forlorn little emaciated black kitten with one blind eye.

"So you bring bad luck to the house, hey, puss?"

Dockery stopped painting a moment, and glanced over his shoulder as he spoke. Since the kitten had joined its fortunes to his, he had been in the habit of keeping an eye on it, as he explained to the German woman downstairs, but such an interpretation hardly accounted for the long confidential talks in which Dockery revealed all his theories, his ambitions, and the reasons of his continued defeats, frequently ending with the gloomiest expressions of hopeless discouragement. The truth was that to the lonely artist in his unfrequented studio, the kitten had become as good as people.

"Are you bad luck?" Dockery repeated playfully, over his shoulder.

The kitten emerged from a shadowy corner, where, with precocious instinct, it had been scenting out the probabilities of mice. Fluffy, undressed black, it seemed to be, with an impertinent little look due to the necessity it felt of cocking its head on one side, the better to make use of its single eye. It came slowly across the floor on wavering legs, and when it reached the easel sat down beside it on its insignificant tail.

Dockery put the brush he was using between his teeth a moment, and, bending over, took the little fellow up. The brightness of the sunlit outer world came in at the skylight, and, with the sketches Dockery had tacked up, and the litter of wrappings and cordings which the porter's wife had taken out, the studio looked almost homelike. But warmth was wanting.

Beside the grate lay the bundle of firewood. Near by, against the wall, leant the "Society" picture without its frame. Dockery had disposed of the frame for a song, which paid the milkman's bill and a few inevitables, so that very little remained. But Dockery's manual labours had been lightened in the last few days, owing to the kitten's no longer requiring to be fed with a spoon. In evidence of this, the spoon lay shelved on the mantelpiece. The kitten's tin cup was—anywhere handy, and wonder was that Dockery never stumbled over it.

"I tell you," Dockery began, following out some train of thought aloud to his companion, "tell you, kittie, the world hasn't any use for you and me. It doesn't want us; it doesn't want us."

He paused awhile, and the kitten rubbed itself a little against his coat.

"They want to starve us out," he continued bitterly; "but I tell you what it is, if we have just a little turn of luck we will pack up our traps and go home!"

The weather grew bitterly cold. Dockery lived in his overcoat, and now and then marvelled at the paint-spots that increased upon it in spite of his precautions. Finally a great splash of oil appeared on his sleeves, and he felt constrained to forego his constitutionals, at least until it could be cleaned.

"Very handy garment, isn't it?" he asked, one bleak morning, as he helped the kitten into a side pocket. Then he began sorting out what brushes he was likely to need, and occasionally he thrust his hands into his pockets again.

"It's cold," he would explain apologetically, as his icy fingers buried themselves in the kitten's warm fur. "I think after a while we'll go down and ask the little woman, just as an excuse, you know, if we've any letters, and toast our toes at the kitchen stove. And I tell you what, the minute we get that letter, if there is one, we soak every paint rag with turpentine and set that wood in a blaze that will burn the chimney out."

The porter's wife knocked at the door as he spoke. After she came in her sharp black eyes were straying round the studio. Many little things which she had helped Dockery to arrange were missing.

"Oh, you been havin' some hard time," she exclaimed impulsively.

Dockery winced. It is painful to feel our misery: it is worse to have others see it.

"De leetle cat," she went on hastily. "Ah, Mister Docker, he bring de troub' ven he came in at de door. Vere ees he, dose days?"

"Well," said Dockery, returning to his easel, "for my part I'm not going to blame him for what has been happening months before he came." Somehow he did not feel inclined to tell her that the little cat was curled up in his pocket. There are times when the best of us like to temporise.

Dockery closed the door of his studio and dropped into a chair. The kitten blinked drowsily and shrank from the cold air. There was something uncanny about the little black upturned face which Dockery had never noticed before. It looked weazened, and there was a strange cunning in the small, darting eye. Dockery studied it intently for a long time and then, almost without knowing, he framed the old question:

"*Are* you bad luck?"

But nothing came of it. A sphinx would not have been less responsive, and finally Dockery went back to his easel feeling that he had lost his last friend. A freezing studio, a heavy heart, and an empty pocket were the sum of Dockery's equipment after that.

"Might as well be in the street," he grumbled drearily one morning when no sunlit air melted the thick frost on the skylight and he could not see to work. "Might just as well, and that's what we're coming to when the month is up. Hey, pussie, would you like to go back where you came from?"

The kitten rubbed itself against his feet. He had not petted it much of late, and his conscience reproached him when he saw how thin the little thing was beneath its fur. He picked it up tenderly, and the kitten licked his hand.

"It's a burning shame," cried Dockery, all unconscious of the hollows in his own cheeks, and ignoring, from necessity, the warnings of hunger. "It's a burning shame that a little thing like this, that never did anybody any harm, should be left to die of starvation in the street. No, sir, we may starve, but we'll have one square meal first." This last to the kitten, who purred contentedly until Dockery calmed down again and paced the room only to keep warm until it should grow light enough to paint.

But it did not grow light enough that day nor the next, and the day after dawned bleak and colder still. Dockery remembered that day all his life.

"I'm going off, Pussie, going to leave you to take care of the traps." Dockery spoke with difficulty from the numbness of his face. "Going to find some breakfast, puss. Look out for yourself," and, letting himself

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out of the studio door with care, that the kitten should not accompany him, he closed it and went down the narrow, echoing staircase.

The streets were almost deserted; here and there people hurried past with hands or muffs to their faces, and heads bent low. It was the first walk Dockery had taken for two weeks, and he felt stiff and numb. His eyes fell on his shoes as he came into the avenue where smart carriages were rattling along sharply on the frozen road, and a few gay pedestrians in furs passed with skates over their shoulders. They did not notice Dockery at all.

"Well, Tom Dockery! This is what I call a piece of luck. Well, well, well."

Dockery lifted his bewildered eyes to the face of the portly man whose hand was on his shoulder, and whose other hand was cordially outstretched. "Mr. Harris!" he cried.

"Exactly," laughed his friend, "and I hadn't the slightest idea you were in these parts. How long have you been here? Why didn't you look me up the moment you arrived, or send word so that I could drop in on you, and talk over the jolly times I spent at your place. Do you know, Dockery, I look back to those years as the best times of my life. How did you leave your mother and the young ladies?"

"My sisters are now married," answered Dockery, trying to conquer the burning consciousness of his shabby garments. "Mother spends half a year with each, and I have come here to see how the art public compares with the other 'lovers.' Oh, we've all scattered to the four winds."

They were walking up the street arm-in-arm, for Dockery's new-found friend had turned back in the direction he was himself taking, and Dockery's sensitive soul was suffering agonies at the attention they attracted, for "Mr. Harris" seemed to be a personal acquaintance of every other passer-by.

"I want to see some of your work. You know I've taken the collecting fever, and I've really picked up some treasures. I want you to see them and tell me what you think." Mr. Harris chatted briskly as they walked.

"I'd like to inspect the shop," he said, "if you are not too busy to see people. What is the address?"

"Well," replied Dockery laughing, "the fact is I've moved so many times in the last few months, I hardly know myself, but it is along here, and if you really care to run in, I would only be too glad to have you."

"Let's go, then," said Harris in his unaffected way, and Dockery took him to the studio, inwardly wishing that he had happened on Harris when "the studio" was situated in a more fashionable locality.

Mr. Harris, collector and philanthropist, followed Dockery up the half-dark little staircase, wondering what sort of a gem he might find in this odd corner, and how much Dockery would need to set him on his feet again.

"Rural things!" he exclaimed a few minutes later, his eyes glancing eagerly about the walls and then settling in a business-like way on the picture Dockery had been touching up for lack of other work. "Well, well, well!"—in genuine delight—"I hadn't thought of that; but it's a great thing. That's nice, that sketch of live-oaks; they look like real trees. I tell you it does me good to see something like that straight from Nature, without any fads."

"I painted a good-sized picture from that sketch," said Dockery. "It's lying about here somewhere."

"Good!" cried Mr. Harris. "Let me see it. Show me lots of things."

And Dockery, nothing loth, turned over his portfolios and unearthed canvases until Mr. Harris bethought himself of the time, and looked at his watch with a cry of dismay.

"Oh, there's a man waiting to see me at the club this minute," he explained. "He lives out of town, or it wouldn't matter so much. Now, I was coming to this in the course of time, but we'll have to settle things out of hand. I like those live oaks, and if you'll choose me a good frame that will set them off well, I'll be only too happy to foot the difference, and make it a place in my little gallery. Put your own price on it," he said, sitting down to the little table where Dockery kept his writing materials, and drawing out his cheque-book in a matter-of-fact way.

Dockery's head reeled. He remembered that he had modestly asked £60 for the picture in palmier days, but for the life of him he could not set a price now. Sixty pounds! His eyes strayed round the room as he tried to collect his thoughts; they fell on the empty grate.

Then he kicked the middle out of the bundle of firewood, and set the whole ablaze.

"Say a hundred, and call it square," suggested Mr. Harris, using the blotting-paper; "of course, I will settle for the frame. Now I must rush off, or I'll miss my man! I'm coming up again, though—you've got some good things here. I may come in with a friend of mine."

"But look here," cried Dockery, "Mr. Harris, this won't do."

"What's the matter?" asked the picture-collector quickly. "Of course, I'll put more if you——"

"It's already more than I originally asked," said Dockery, with a smile, "and I'm not going to take any such sum."

"Oh, well, we'll make that all right, if that's all the trouble. I'll come and choose a sketch or two. I'm glad I ran across you."

"I'm more than glad I ran across you," answered Dockery fervently. "By George, I—I had forgotten there were such people as you," he added, fingering the cheque.

Mr. Harris laughed uneasily as he moved towards the door. He hated to be thanked in the face, and, besides, he knew that he had found a rare good thing in Dockery.

"Bless me!" he cried, with sudden relief. "What have you here?"

Dockery followed the direction of his patron's eyes. "Oh, that?" said he. "That's a kitten."

"Looks like it," agreed Mr. Harris, his mouth twitching, for at sound of its name the kitten was coming over to its master, legs sprawling, tail dragging, and head cocked. Dockery picked it up.

"You see," he explained, "we've been roughing it together here."

"Well, he's a queer one," and Mr. Harris bent closer a moment to examine the mite. "Dockery," he exclaimed, "he has but one eye. I'd beware of him if I were in your place. No telling what malediction he may bring down upon your head," and laughing, the art collector made his escape.

"It's a poor rule that doesn't work both ways," Dockery called after him, at the same time tossing the kitten into the air, "and regarding this great and glorious city," he added, catching it, and nestling his face in its fur, "I think we've experienced a change of heart."

ETHEL.

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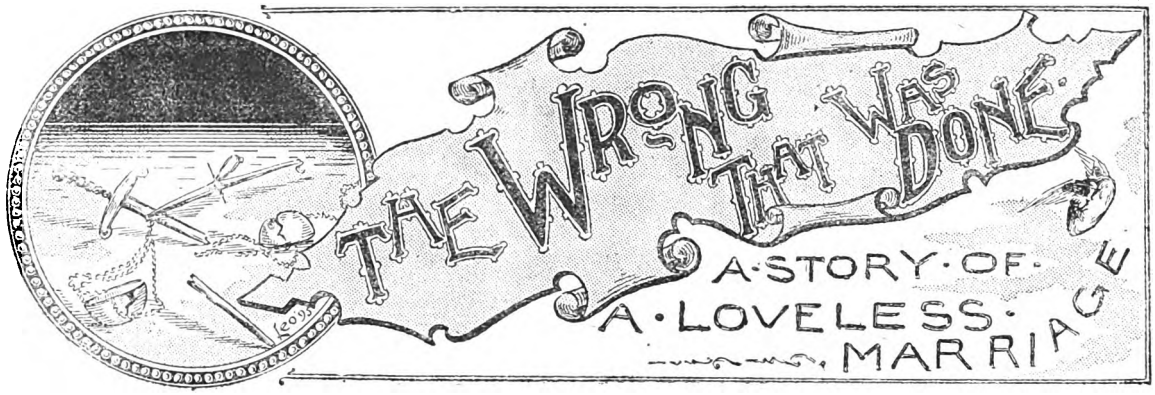

By E. C. WAGGENER.

CHAPTER VIII.

GRIEF that grows more hopeless with the long hours of night often loses some of its bitterness with the dawn of a new day. So it was with Helen. Viewed in the clear light of day, there was a great deal in her conduct of the previous night for self-condemnation and regret. The storm of her anger, if not spent, was at least sufficiently lulled to allow her to reason calmly.

She felt that she had done wrong in condemning Gifford without allowing him to make an explanation; she should, at least, have given him a chance to defend himself. After spending the night in fierce, unreasoning anger, she began to feel a faint twinge of remorse for the harsh words she had spoken. And now they were past recall; she had driven him away from her for ever. What would she have given now to feel once again his strong arms round her?

And with her sudden regret came a strange longing for the woman who had either wilfully or innocently helped to ruin her happiness and wreck her life. Never, not even in the early days of their first separation, had she longed for Kitty as she longed for her now. And perhaps it was the memory of those childish days that caused her to do what very few women under the circumstances would have done. She hastily penned a few lines to Kitty, begging her to come at once. She made no allusion to her trouble, however, except in the pathetic line she added at the close: "If you ever cared for me, Kitty, you'll come to me now."

"She'll come just as soon as she gets my letter," was Helen's mental comment, as she hurried to the post-office. This done, she felt a degree of relief in the thought that perhaps Kitty would be able to explain many things that seemed very dark and mysterious now.

"I know she'll come; she can't refuse," she repeated over and over again during the whole of that miserable day—a day spent in restless wanderings through the little rooms, or pitiful attempts at housework, or, perhaps, an effort at reading, all of which were abandoned almost in the beginning.

By some lucky chance, no visitor dropped in, and Helen wondered vaguely if anyone knew of her trouble. But, of course, they didn't. Gifford, she was sure, had not been so foolish as to speak of it to anybody down at the station. Well, she would keep it a secret just as long as possible, for she knew well how scandalised her friends and neighbours would be, and what they would say, and she didn't want their pity or their sympathy. As to what she was to do and how she was to live she had no thought nor care. She would have laughed to scorn the idea that a long life lay before her. She had lived the whole of her life in the year and a half just ended, and there was nothing left her now but to die.

The long, desolate day ended at last, and, with the twilight, a cool, refreshing breeze sprang up. For a long time Helen stood in the little sitting-room, gazing into the fire. Presently exhausted in body and mind, she crept to her favourite seat on the verandah, and looked absently out at the green, undulating meadows, the little brook that went winding past the village, and the woods rising dark and solemn and still beyond. Then, when the moon dropped behind the hills, and one by one the lights went out in the village, she staggered in as one blind, groping her way to the bed, lay down, and in a few minutes had sunk into a broken, haunted sleep.

Strange dreams came to her in that sleep—dreams of

To feel once again his strong arms round her.

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shadowy forms and faces flitting ever mockingly before her—visions of grotesque figures with hideous, grinning lips, and glimmering lights that danced before her eyes, then faded away, only to appear as suddenly again. Was it a horrible nightmare? she wondered. For, through it all she was dimly conscious of familiar sounds; the noise of a closing door; the clear, sweet tinkle of sheep-bells; the fragment of an old, half-forgotten song, borne on the summer wind, and the confused murmur of voices that sounded indistinct and far away.

Yet the shadowy faces never left her. Sometimes they were the faces of friends, long since dead; sometimes it was Kitty who bent over her pillow, but oftener it was Gifford, who looked at her with such stern, reproachful eyes that she longed to cry out and beg him to go away.

And when at last she woke she saw the sun shining in at the open window, heard the song of birds and the drowsy chirp of insects in the grass—saw and heard without the power to lift her head from the pillow. What strange weakness was this which had come upon her? she asked herself wonderingly—this inability to throw off the spell of those terrible dreams?

Surely that was Kitty sitting yonder by the window. Yet, if Kitty, how changed she was, and how pale and haggard her face looked with the sunshine streaming full upon it.

Presently, as if in answer to the mute questioning of her eyes, the figure rose and came over to the bed. Yes, it was Kitty, sadly changed, it is true, but with the old tender light shining in her soft brown eyes.

"You are better, dear?" she said, kneeling by the bed and passing her hand fondly over Helen's hair.

"Better?" and there was a vague wonder in Helen's great hollow eyes. "Why, have I been ill?"

"Yes, but you are much better now."

"How long have I been lying here?"

"A week."

"A week!" whispered Helen, trying to raise her head from the pillow. "And it seems that I have been asleep for years. But it was only a dream—a horrible dream! What are *you* doing here? and where is Gifford?"—a strange, wild light came into her eyes.

"I came to nurse you, dear," said Kitty soothingly.

"I remember now"—and there was such pain and reproach in the weak voice that Kitty's face blanched to an ashen hue, and the hand she had laid on Helen's head was suddenly withdrawn.

"You must tell me everything—*everything*, I say!" cried Helen, raising herself by a strong effort and catching hold of her sister's hand. "That is why I wanted you, that is why I sent for you. *You* deceived me, too! You said——"

She broke off suddenly, and lifted her hands to her head. "Don't leave me, Kitty, don't leave me!" she whispered brokenly.

Lifted her hands to her head.

"You know I will never leave you, Helen, never again," said Kitty, her eyes misty with tears. "And I will sit here and hold your hand, if you will be quiet and try to sleep."

"Sleep! I feel that I will never sleep again!"

"But you must, or you will be getting worse again. There, take this, and presently, when you are quiet, I will answer all your questions."

Helen took the medicine passively, and in a few moments Kitty had the satisfaction of seeing her fall into a quiet sleep.

Something more potent than Helen's letter had brought Kitty back to Looe. A telegram from Gifford had come to her, bidding her come to Helen at once, as she was in deep trouble and needed her. That was all, but it was sufficient to cause her to make a few hasty preparations and take the train for Looe in two hours after receiving the message. She had reached the cottage to find her sister alone, and raving in the delirium of fever.

Either fortunately or unfortunately for the sick girl, nobody had chanced in, so it was not difficult for Kitty to assume the responsibility of answering the questions which poured in from every quarter when it became necessary to summon a physician from Mallingford. She gathered some idea of the nature of Helen's trouble from the poor girl's incoherent words, and to those who called for the purpose of offering their services she simply explained that Gifford had been unexpectedly summoned from home on a matter of important business.

CHAPTER IX.

"Now you must begin at the beginning, and tell me everything. I won't wait a minute longer. You've put me off from day to day, as if I were a child to be coaxed or frightened into keeping silent, just as it pleased *you*."

Helen was seated in an easy-chair by the window, her head supported by a pillow, her grey eyes looking larger and more wistful than usual because of the hollow cheeks and bloodless lips.

"If I have not told you, it was because you were not strong enough to bear excitement of any kind," said Kitty gently, "and because I was afraid what I would have to tell you would make you hate me. Oh, Helen, I deceived you from the very first, and now when your life is ruined, and it is too late for me to make any reparation, you ask me for the truth. How can I tell it? How can I say things that will cause you to turn against me?"

"Nothing you can tell me now will make me hate you," said Helen wearily. "I think I am past all hating, or loving."

"There is so little to tell that I could say it in very few words, but it would make it none the less hard," said Kitty, coming over to her sister's chair and kneeling beside it. "I met Gifford for the first time at a fancy dress ball at Aunt Dorothy's—"

"Then you knew him before you came home this last time?" interrupted Helen in great surprise. "Oh, Kitty, how *could* you deceive me so?"

"Don't look at me in that reproachful way, Helen, or I will never be able to tell you anything."

"I won't interrupt you again," said Helen a little impatiently. "Go on, and tell me the rest."

"I think I cared for him from the very first," continued Kitty in a low voice, and hurrying over her words as if eager to get through with her story, "and when, two months afterwards, he told me that he loved me and asked me to marry him, I consented without any coquetry or hesitation. And I would have been the happiest girl in the world but for one thing. Aunt Dorothy was bitterly opposed to my marrying any one, and especially Gifford Vane. I never knew why she conceived such a strong dislike to him, but I know she made me very miserable at times by her cold, almost insulting, attitude towards him, and by her strange behaviour to me.

"I was too much in love, however, and too self-willed to

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allow her to interfere with any of my plans, and boldly declared my intention of marrying when and whom I pleased. Gifford seemed to fear her influence, though, and made me promise not to listen to any charges she or any one else might prefer against him.

"Then, one day, when he was absent from the city, his uncle, an eccentric old man of whom I had never seen or heard before, paid me a visit, during which he informed me that he had other plans for his nephew than marrying me, a poor dependent girl, and that if I persisted in keeping my promise to Gifford I would bitterly regret it. He refused to explain anything, saying that Aunt Dorothy could tell me why it would be best for me to break my engagement with Gifford. Then he went away as suddenly and mysteriously as he had come."

"And what did Aunt Dorothy say?"

"She declared that Gifford was an adventurer, that he was addicted to all sorts of excesses, and that if I didn't promise at once to break off with him she would turn me out of the house. But I can't tell you all she said. I only know she said enough to cause me to declare that I would leave her house and never willingly look upon his face again. And I kept my word. I went away the very next day, telling no one of my destination, and caring very little what became of me. I never saw Gifford again until I met him here in Looe."

"You acted very foolishly," said Helen with a sad little smile. "If you cared for him you shouldn't have allowed Aunt Dorothy or any one else to have come between you."

"I did write to him afterwards, but no answer ever came to my letter. And something happened soon after I left to further strengthen my determination to give him up. I received, almost by accident, a long letter from Valentine Beverly, in which he reproached me bitterly for treating him as I did, and for ruining his life. That letter, coming to me just when it did, gave me such a shock that for many days afterwards I was too miserable to think of anything else."

"But I don't understand," said Helen vaguely. "What did Val Beverly have to do with your caring for Gifford and marrying him? And how had you ruined his life?"

"You will understand presently. When I came home after uncle's death, and found Beverly there, and knew that our stepfather was planning to get me to marry him, I was very angry, and made no effort to conceal the state of my feelings. But when I saw that my contemptuous treatment of them both had no effect, the idea suddenly entered my mind to change my demeanour—to pretend that I was not averse to their plan, and to lead Val on until I was sure he cared for me, then to refuse him at the last moment, and so put an end to our stepfather's scheming.

"I was young, and foolish, and headstrong, and knowing Colonel Beverly's great fondness for Val, I thought it an easy way to have revenge for the slights and ill-treatment I had been forced to endure ever since our mother's death. I knew his sole object in wishing me to marry Val was to prevent me from forcing him to leave the house. Once married, he imagined we would all live peaceably together, and that I would give him no further trouble about the property. Besides, we had been at dagger-points so long that I think he was getting tired of it, and wanted to be left in peace.

"Val was very handsome, and just vain enough to fancy it the easiest matter in the world to win me. Perhaps he

"I met Gifford for the first time at a fancy dress ball."

really did love me. In every bad man's life there is some attachment, I think, that in its beginning was pure, and honest, and true, and it may have been that his love for me was of that sort. I know I led him on from day to day until I believe he would have committed almost any foolish deed if he thought by so doing he could please me.

"We were engaged, and I even went so far as to fix the wedding-day, feeling a sort of savage delight in the thought that my revenge was so near at hand. Colonel Beverly was delighted over his apparent success, and treated me so kindly and with so much consideration, that occasionally I felt a little compunction of conscience for what I was doing, especially when I saw his heart was bound up in Val—he who was so callous to everyone else. But I stifled all such twinges of remorse, and one night, just a week before the day set for the wedding, in the presence of Colonel Beverly, I quietly handed Val his ring, and coolly informed him that the matter had gone quite far enough, that I had never had any intention of marrying him, and that he should leave the place at once.

"Of course there was a scene. Val pleaded and threatened

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by turns, and looked so wretched and desperate that I was a little frightened, while Colonel Beverly stormed, and raved, and swore that I, not Val, should leave the house, and at once. Feeling that I had gained nothing by my foolish act, the maid hurriedly packed my trunk, and I went back to Aunt Dorothy, with the firm resolution never to return home again, or, at least, while Colonel Beverly lived.

"For a few weeks I thought of Val only occasionally, yet always with a feeling of regret for what I had done. Still, I don't think I quite realised the wickedness and cruelty of

"The maid hurriedly packed my trunk."

my conduct until his letter came full of such bitter reproaches. I didn't stop to think that a worthless man like Val Beverly could hardly be ruined by the ill-treatment of any woman. I felt that in having to give up Gifford I was being punished for treating Val as I did, and the conviction came to me that I was not worthy of the love of any true, honest man. And when I came home two years ago and found that Gifford was living here in Looe, that he was in the habit of visiting you, and that you had learned to care for him, what else *could* I have done, Helen, but keep silent as to the past? And when I remembered what a lonely, unhappy life you had led until he came, I felt that I could not wrong you more than by coming between you and his love."

"I went back to Aunt Dorothy."

"But he didn't care for me, and you knew it, so there is where you did wrong," said Helen bitterly. "I think I understand your motive, but you didn't do right when you deceived me."

"I know it now, when it is too late," said Kitty sadly. "Yet Gifford and I could never have been happy if we had married," she added quickly. "Do you suppose I could have had one moment of happiness knowing that you were miserable?"

"But am I not miserable now?" asked Helen passionately. "Even as his wife, am I not the most wretched creature living? And perhaps if I had known the truth at first I would have learned to forget him."

"You said once that it would kill you to lose him."

"Did I? Well, I have lost him and am still living, so you see how foolish it was of me to say such a thing. Oh, Kitty!"—with a sudden uplifting of the thin, nerveless hands—"go away and leave me to myself a while. My mind is too weak and my heart too heavy to bear any more."

(To be concluded.)

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THE STORY OF AN Academy Picture.

CUTHBERT RYVEER and his cousin Reginald had lunched sumptuously in the little sitting-room opening into Cuthbert's studio, and were reviling men, women, and Royal Academicians to an accompaniment of coffee and curaçao. Reginald did most of the reviling: he had had four pictures returned on his hands by the hanging committee, had been abroad ever since, and had been finally rejected in Paris by a lovely American to whom he had offered his hand and heart intermittently as he followed her and her parents from Florence to France.

"Though why you want to marry, and why you want to paint pictures, I cannot understand," said Cuthbert, in concluding what he considered a neatly expressed speech of cousinly condolence.

"Why not?"

"Give me half your income and I'll show you why not."

Perhaps Reginald Ryveer thought the price too high too pay even for the edifying example of his cousin's methods of enjoying idleness and celibacy; for he only sighed and said: "I shall have to marry Emily."

"I'll be shot if you do!" said Cuthbert. Emily was a cousin of both, who had been selected as an appropriate match for Reginald by their parents, owing to the fact thas she was as rich as he was, and Cuthbert had other views on the subject. "Dash it! I hope he's not thinking of Emily seriously," he murmured to himself. There was a look of profoundly meditative melancholy on Reginald's face at that moment; as a matter of fact, he was trying a new brand of cigars, but his cousin did not know that.

"I must divert his thoughts," reflected Cuthbert, picking up a letter. "What do you make of that?" Reginald Ryveer read it.

DEAR SIR,—I propose calling upon you to-day, and hope I shall find you at home. You have severed two hearts, and I shall ask you to reunite them.

Yours truly,
ROSALIE WEST.

"Good handwriting and paper," he said as a comment. "What does it mean?"

"Dashed if I know! Good address, too. Big place in Berkshire, near where I painted last year; but I never spoke to a soul there, though I know some Norths in the county. There are the Easts, too, in town, but I know no one called West. Would you mind seeing her for me, old chap? It might be awkward."

"You're very kind," said Reginald. "In fact, you always were. I think this time you shall handle your own chestnuts." And the subject dropped.

"You have three of your daubs in the Academy," said Reginald after a pause—"two figures and a landscape. You can't paint landscapes."

"There are two figures in the landscape," said Cuthbert modestly. "People like sentiment and sunshine. In combination they are irresistible; besides, one of the figures is you."

Reginald groaned. "Not the thing for which you made me sit for two hours on the back of a chair, with my arms round a pillow? They never took that?"

"They did," said Cuthbert. But at that moment his housekeeper came in to clear away lunch. When she had half finished, she said suddenly: "There's a young person, sir, in the studio, named West." Mrs. Simpkins regarded all models with an eye of disapproval, and was inclined to include Cuthbert Ryveer's lady-sitters in the same category.

"Good gracious, Mrs. Simpkins!" said Cuthbert. "Has she been there long?"

"Half-an-hour," said the good lady composedly. Cuthbert whistled, and looked appealingly at Reginald; but he only shook is head and winked derisively. "I suppose I must go," said Cuthbert; and, fortified by another liqueur, he entered his studio.

She was walking up and down impatiently. She was very tall and very pretty. So much he saw before she saw him, and began:

"I am sorry if I have called when you were busy," she said (he bowed); "but my business would not wait." (He nodded.) "I have called about a picture of yours in the Royal Academy, called 'Rushcroft Lane'—Rushcroft Lane," she repeated. "It would not have mattered half so much if you had not put the name."

"If you want to buy it," said Cuthbert, "you should apply to the proper person at Burlington House. I

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never sell my own pictures." Cuthbert Ryveer was rising, and inclined to give himself airs.

"I don't want to buy it," she said, "I want to burn it."

"Anything else in a small way?" he asked. "Will you kindly explain?" ("Beautiful, but quite mad!" was his mental ejaculation.)

"Certainly I will explain," she said in a tone of more or less calm indignation. "You have painted Rushcroft Lane, with me in it in my red skirt and my big straw hat with a red handkerchief round it, so that every one can recognise it; it was most ungentlemanlike!"

Cuthbert Ryveer did not like the last word. Some men run from an angry woman, some give in, some fight. "My dear young lady," said Cuthbert, "I understand you now. After I had painted Rushcroft Lane for three days you settled yourselves in the middle distance while I ate my lunch. You spoiled my view of the church tower through the gap, so I put you in instead; you both appeared so—contented—I did not like to disturb you," he added drily.

"Both of us!" she exclaimed, getting crimson. "Both! You call that Edwin?"

"I don't call it Edwin or anything else," said Cuthbert calmly. "Does 'Edwin' consider himself libelled?"

"No; but I do."

"You!"

"Yes, I," she said; "I asked a barrister cousin of mine, and he says I could sue you for libel—I've written it down to remember it—'sue you for libel, and, perhaps, make you a third party to an action for breach of promise of marriage, if I sue Edwin for that'—there." She had glanced at some pencil-notes on an envelope, which she returned to her pocket. Cuthbert looked puzzled. "Don't you see," she went on, "the man in your picture is leaning over me, and Edwin only comes up to my elbow. He is wearing a brown coat, and Edwin always wears grey; he has square shoulders, and Edwin—well, poor Edwin's figure is his weak point," she said, relaxing into a smile.

"He ought to be flattered," said Cuthbert.

"He isn't, though," said Miss West. "He's furiously jealous. It's no use telling him I never did such a thing; I've told him again and again I never sat on a stile with anyone but him, and I never have—on that stile. But it's no use my saying anything; he's broken it all off and sent back all my presents—and—and, unless you can make it right, I must send back his."

She looked quite tearful now, and it became her better than anger. Cuthbert was touched.

"My dear Miss West," he said, "I will do anything I can. By Jove!" he added to himself, "she's as pretty as Emily—or nearly so."

"Of course, it all rests with you," she said; "how could you do such a thing?"

"I have told you how I put *you* in," he answered. "I apologise for the skirt, but it was the one bit of colour the picture really wanted. I am very sorry. And the big hat was charming."

She had on a big hat then—a big broad-brimmed hat with tulips nodding in a bunch of bold colour on top of it. She glanced at it in his long pier-glass as he spoke, and she looked mollified.

"But Edwin?" she said. "You can't say it's like him."

"Edwin," he answered, hesitating—"I beg his pardon, I know him by no other name—Edwin, no doubt, has great qualities of—heart—and that sort of thing: but——"

"Well," she said sharply, "what of that?"

"Well," he continued, "it struck me that Edwin's figure was not quite what was wanted as a complement to yours in the picture."

"Poor Edwin!" she said, not apparently offended: "we did not think of that. He is a little—fat, certainly; but the other man must have a lovely figure, or was he out of your head?"

"No, he's a real man, and he has a good figure—I've flattered him, of course—he's my cousin. He's in the next room now, and he's never been in Berkshire."

"I believe," she said, "Edwin has been inquiring everywhere whether anyone has seen a very tall man in our neighbourhood; he knows I like tall men. Poor Edwin!" she added absently. "I wish he had broad shoulders and was a nice height to dance with. Did you say *he* was here?" she was blushing a little as she looked up, and the tulips were nodding on top of her hat.

"She's really quite as pretty as Emily," said Cuthbert to himself. "I wonder if Reggy is thinking of Emily all this time?" He forgot to answer her question; he was thinking so much about other things. And she spoke next.

"Did I really sit just as you painted me?" she asked.

"Well, of course," said Cuthbert, "Edwin could not look down into your eyes quite like that. I should think Edwin's arm comes about right for your waist when you are walking."

"Pardon me," she said rather stiffly, "we are forgetting what I came about; will you write an explanation and send it to Edwin, or to me; and perhaps your cousin will write one also? 'Edwin Delaine, Esquire, Beachgrove House.'"

"I remember the place; it's a very pretty one. Is it his?"

"Yes," she said, "when his old uncle dies."

"It reminds me of one my cousin has in Hampshire," said Cuthbert irrelevantly. "I'll make it all right, then, and Edwin—I beg his pardon—Mr. Delaine shall have his explanation."

"Did you say your cousin was here?" she said; "perhaps I had better see him, then I shall know it's all right. Of course, I believe you, but if Edwin saw him afterwards, and he was not like the picture, it might be awkward. Poor Edwin is very, very jealous, I am afraid."

"Poor Edwin!" said Cuthbert to himself, as he went to fetch his cousin. "She's a deuced pretty girl, and would make no end of a picture in that big hat she has on."

"Poor Edwin!" said Cuthbert again an hour later, as he ordered tea. "I think she might talk to me a little more." And he added, in a louder voice: "Don't you think that if you are still in doubt as to whether the likeness is correct, Reggy, you might take Miss West to the Academy and look at the picture again? I have a sitter due now. This west window is capital in the afternoon."

A week later he had a note, which ran thus:

DEAR BERTIE,—Miss West says you need not bother to write to that Delaine fellow.—Yours, in haste, R. R.

He looked at the post-mark. "Poor Edwin!" said Cuthbert Ryveer.

PETER PARR.

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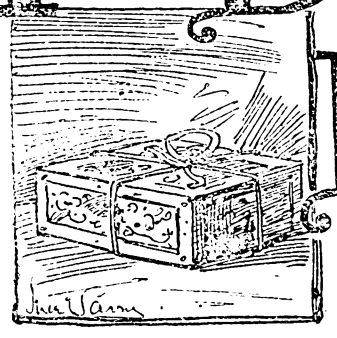
The Bottom of the Bon-Bon Box



IT was two o'clock. The month, April—between two showers—April, smiling with sun, under an azure sky, with fleecy cloud-drifts like bits of thistle-down; the carriages rolled noisily, the idle strollers joyously dawdled through the crowded streets so recently washed by a tepid rain.

Whirling with the rest, the dark green brougham of the Baronne de Rozier turned the corner of the Place de la Trinité, passed swiftly the stormy cross streets of the Boulevard Haussman, rolled briskly down the Chaussée d'Antin, to suddenly pull up with a jerk that bounced the Baronne like a ball upon the mellow, myrtle-green, gold-buttoned cushions of her luxuriously appointed equipage.

With the shock came a cry, yells, hoots, *badinage*. She hastily pulled down the glass, to find herself the centre figure of a jostling crowd—talking, ordering, gestulating with that furious sympathy and exasperation peculiar to excited mobs. A ragged *gamin*, with hands in his pocket, leapt to the carriage step to thrust out his tongue at her; a street fakir spied her and reviled her with a volley of slang; the coachman's whip plied right and left like an angry black snake; and the Baronne, mad with terror, was out of the carriage and pushing her way to the pavement with the energy of despair.

Once there, she threw herself into the first open door—a cake and cream establishment, passed like a bomb into the *crême salle* behind it, to fall upon a chair, pale, breathless, swooning.

She came to herself slowly. Happily the luncheon hour was over, the pastry-room empty, the shop girls with nothing to occupy them were free to crowd about her pityingly, with all the zeal of their tender hearts and the remedies learnt from romantic novels. They loosened her veil, removed her hat, unbuttoned her coat and bodice, and even contemplated an attack upon her corsets.

And the Baronne, hearing everything, the stir and commotion, but unable to move or speak, remained inert and strengthless upon her chair.

"Come, come, be quiet, girls; she's all right now, I think," said a sonorous, deep-toned voice—a man's voice, rising authoritatively above the shriller chattering of the excited damsels.

The Baronne, opening her eyes, saw a tall form bending over her; also, that it was snugly buttoned into a well-fitting overcoat; that the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour peeped from under the left lapel, and that the figure was crowned, as her gaze languidly travelled higher and higher, with a face that made her sit bolt upright with a little cry:

"You, Richard!"

It was his turn now to start, gaze at her blankly, drop her wrist as if it burnt him, and repeat the cry:

"You, Armande!"

Suddenly resuscitated, the Baronne sprang to her feet, rehooked her *corsage*, smoothed down her skirts and her hair with a sweep of the hand, readjusted her loosened jacket, and once more turned upon the astonished gentleman the dazzling beauty of her five-and-thirty years. Then, content with herself, sweet as honey, serenely calm, she advanced upon him with outstretched hand.

"Monsieur, need you stand there as if planted?" she said.

He bowed profoundly.

"And to think, too, Richard"—she paused on the name doubtfully and a little reproachfully—"that you did not know me; that you still refuse to speak to me."

This was too much; the gentleman called "Richard" unbent in spite of himself.

"I really did not," said he. "As for speaking, you gave me no time. Moreover, *ma bonne amie*, one does not seek, as a rule, to crush old acquaintances precisely in this way. Divorce does not even warrant it."

"What is it you say—crush old acquaintances?" raising her hand with an appealing gesture.

Meanwhile the little waitresses, seeing the lady herself again, had scattered to their usual stations; one only returned with the Baronne's *chapeau*—apparently a tuft of primroses in a lace rosette—assisted her to pin it on her heavy braids, and then she also discreetly departed. The girl out of hearing the Baronne repeated her question:

"What do you mean?" said she. "What old acquaintance did I crush, and how?"

"Me, Richard Plantier, surgeon of the Paris hospitals, your own ex-husband and most obedient servant, madame."

"You?"

From head to foot she scanned this gentleman of these masterful manners—tall, stately, robust; so much at ease in his plain medical garb, and seeming always to hide a smile in the depths of the dark beard, rayed here and there with a thread of grey, that covered the firm chin. One by one, with the tip of her slender finger, she pointed to the silvery hairs.

"Chagrin!" said he calmly.

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She raised her shoulders, smiling lightly.

"But, seriously, Richard, explain; why, I repeat, do you say that I 'crushed' you?"

He pushed the chair in which she sat towards one of the little tables.

"You will take something, of course; a bad habit, yes; but a plate of cream *pistache?* You were always so fond of *pistache*, I remember."

"Always. Still—take one with me, and have sandwiches instead, brought for two."

Brief as the time had been, the *salle* had begun to fill again. They were no longer alone. Curious glances were beginning to turn towards the corner where this handsome couple sat so unconcernedly.

"Well, the fact is, Armande," said the doctor, at last responding to her question, "I said it because it is true. You did crush me, upset me, stamped and trampled on me—your horses did, at least!" And he gingerly passed his hand up and down his left elbow.

"You are hurt—you are suffering, then?" with anxious contrition.

"Nothing serious. Contused, abraded, as I say, by your horses' hoofs. Luckily for me, your coachman was more adroit than he looked—your footman, too. To restore me to life, he conscientiously sought to drown me. I gave him one hundred sous; enough I suppose?"

She regarded him with amusement.

"The same mania always, I see," said she; "thrusting absurd questions into a serious conversation."

Assisted her to pin it on.

"A habit of trade. I pass my life questioning, catechising, drawing people out——"

"I know," she said seriously; "and, *apropos* of trade, doctor, what a success you have made of it! I never pick up a paper nowadays, but it's Plantier, Plantier here, there, and yonder; hospitals, clinics, memorials, treatises. Your doors besieged by all the world—*grandes dames* and charwomen! Richard Plantier, celebrated surgeon, doctor *à la mode!*"

"At your service, madame. You were the same—a woman *à la mode*; for no sooner did I pick up a paper than I saw your name here, there, and yonder—'the beautiful Baronne le Rozier!' some mention, some compliment, some racy *bon mot*! But lately—for how many months?—two years at least—Paris has neither heard the charm of your voice, nor been refreshed by the beauty of your face. You have been away?"

"Yes."

And as the Baronne said it she demurely glanced at her somewhat sombre dress. Then, with a mischievous lift of eyebrow which the man of medicine remembered, but did not interpret, she laughed and kept quiet. The doctor spoke again:

"Ah, by-the-way, all the world, as you say, does come to consult me; then, why do not you, Armande?"

"I, Richard? I do not need a consultation. I am in perfect health."

"Precisely; too perfect! Pretty soon, *ma belle*, you are going to be fat. I warn you; and it won't improve you either."

"You think so?" demanded she uneasily. "What must I do?"

"You would have me tell you here? A public consultation?"

He rose as he spoke to salute a lady who entered—a slender, willowy, blonde. She stopped at the counter to nibble an *éclair*, and more comfortably scan the Baronne.

"Who is she?"

"A case of mine—anæmia. My duty is to make her fat."

"And to me, to make me thin. You will come to my house to treat me then, Richard?"

"Your—house?" repeated he indecisively. "But he—how would he receive me there?"

"Hum—m!" she smiled, raised her brows, sighed a little.

"He was jealous from the start," she said.

"Ah, I see," said the doctor, "and comprehend it, too," he added gallantly.

Mdme. de Rozier regarded him uneasily. His handsome face remained impassable. Seized with the desire for confidence, however, the Baronne resumed:

"Very jealous, you know, but—with discretion."

"It was for this—discretion—you took him, then?"

"For that and—something else. He was—not like you."

"But I—it was the fault you found with me, you said—I, also, was jealous."

"In your way, my poor Richard. You raged like a tiger, and—let things go. He was born wiser than you."

"He follows you?"

"Perhaps."

"But you are not the woman to be trailed thus, Armande. Formerly, you were adroit enough."

"My faith, yes, and should be still—for something that I truly desired."

"Well, then, there's no help for it; you must come

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to me. I guarantee to reduce your weight fully a dozen pounds."

She hesitated.

"All the world is there in your office," said she.

"But why my office? With the key of the little side-gate—you remember it?"

"To the garden? yes, go on."

"You would be able to find your way directly to your own little boudoir—at present, my study. But what could I do? The patients filled all the *salons* and left me nothing. You shall see for yourself, though, Armande, when you come, if it interests you."

"Certainly it interests me," she smiled brilliantly. "But your fee, doctor, for a consultation?"

"A simple thanks from your beautiful lips."

"How generous! Then you are no longer a miser, Richard?"

"How providential! And you—no longer a spendthrift, Armande?"

They broke into laughter, light-hearted, merry; truly the thing was very droll, ex-husband and wife face to face for the first time in four long years, and recalling, as if it were yesterday, the bickering of other days.

Suddenly the doctor struck his hand to his brow.

"What am I thinking of? Your plate is empty. Some cake, wine, some more cream, Armande?"

"Thanks, no more; my appetite is gone."

"Some bonbons, then. You doted upon them once, I know. Wait one moment. I'll have them done up in a package for you."

And guiding the waitress, box in hand, he went along from case to case, and then, while the girl delayed at the counter to tie up the heap with a silver cord, he returned triumphantly to the Baronne's side.

"The key, Armande," said he, very paternally, "is down in the bottom of the box."

Five minutes later the Baronne de Rozier, with more polite bows and courteous phrases, passed towards her carriage for a "spin" in the Bois.

On the threshold of the shop the Baronne stopped, turned, and held out her hand.

"Ah, doctor! my bonbons, please."

And again came that mysterious lift of the eyebrow, and again he failed to interpret it.

"The Baron," she replied, "has been dead two years."

The Baronne, at home, ate all her bonbons before she rescued the tiny key from the bottom of the box. Then she held it up, and with a smile of a woman of the world discovering some new *divertissement*, exclaimed softly:

"Ah, little key, you are wholly unnecessary; but—you are very amusing."

And after she had mused a moment she went on to herself, still very, very softly:

"And to think he never heard about the—the poor, dear Baron. It is really very amusing." Another smiling pause. "I wonder if the Baron will be jealous? But really I must not try to solve that puzzle; I never was competent to explore the supernatural."

That night, when she went to sleep, the little key was hidden beneath the lace on her bosom. Before she forgot it all, she murmured:

"And to think—he never heard about the—the poor Baron. It is really very amusing." And she added, more slowly, before her eyes closed: "Richard is handsomer than ever, and I always did care for him, even on the day of the decree."

The next evening the Baronne's *coupé* stopped near the little side gate. She turned the key that had been hidden in the box and went in. It was really quite exciting. Richard met her in the garden and gravely walked with her to the decorated room that had once been her own special boudoir.

"I—I am almost sorry after all," he said. "It would never do were it not that a consultation in any other form might—might make him jealous."

"Precisely," she said gravely.

Later, when in the midst of his scientific talk, she reached her arms about his neck and kissed him, he drew back with as near discomposure as he was capable of, and exclaimed:

"But—but the Baron!"

"The Baron," she replied, "has been dead two years."

Then she kissed him again.

Extract from *La Mode*:

"A SURPRISE.

"The Baronne De Rozier, widow, marries her ex-husband."

JEAN DU MAURE.

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AFRA

A Tale of Ancient Rome.

I.

THE slaves of Lucius Menenius were enjoying their leisure with greater freedom than usual. They had the mansion to themselves: Lucius and his son were dining with the quæstor, Camillius; his wife and daughter were still away on their holiday; and even the steward, the only freeman among the servants, was away for the day on business. Not only the two chief slaves—Heliodorus, the head slave of the atrium, and Ninus, the house doctor, but also the slaves of lower rank, were giving themselves up to harmless amusements.

In the household of Lucius Menenius, as in many others of Ancient Rome, there were among the slaves some who were of better birth and higher culture than the rest: men and women who could have taken their places among the citizens with credit to themselves and their surroundings. Heliodorus and Ninus were of this category, as well as two other slaves with whom the reader is about to become acquainted.

Ninus and Heliodorus were reclining on couches in that space known as the peristyle, quietly conversing. They were interrupted by a young man of about twenty years, who came out of the library and passed between them. He said a few words to Heliodorus as he passed, but altogether ignored the presence of Ninus.

The latter smiled sadly. He knew that Geticus, who acted as assistant librarian, had taken a violent dislike to him and was jealous of the esteem in which he was held by master and slaves alike; but his face soon assumed its usual calm appearance and he continued the broken conversation.

Geticus walked through the peristyle and into the garden, evidently in search of someone. He was a handsome, well-formed youth, with animated face and dark, flashing eyes. He walked along the paths with well-kept box-hedges until he espied the object of his search, behind the bushes.

"Afra!" he called softly.

"What is it?" asked a voice.

The branches parted and there appeared the charming figure of a young woman about his own age. The sound of her sweet voice, the pretty smile upon her lips, and the enchanting expression in her eyes, made the young man's heart beat more rapidly than its wont.

"I have sought thee everywhere, like a lost piece of gold," said Geticus in his most winning manner. "Then I bethought me that I should find thee among the flowers. And for whom are those roses?"

"For the master, Lucius Menenius."

"Oh! for the master!" murmured Geticus, with a trace of disappointment in his voice.

"Yes! He will be pleased to see these on his table when he comes home."

"Lucius Menenius is to be envied!" returned the young man. "And, wondrous to say, it is Afra the cold, the icy-hearted, who is so zealous, so anxious to please! Were it not that Lucius is over fifty, one would say that thou wert in love with him!"

"Nay," said Afra. "But is he not always kind and fatherly towards us?"

"Yes," replied Geticus drily; "particularly towards the young and pretty!"

"Fie on thee!" exclaimed Afra, her face flushing with indignation; "that is a sorry jest. Thou art so accustomed to his kindness that thou hast lost all sense of gratitude. How many masters like him wilt thou find in Rome? Not one, I tell thee."

"He is not so pleasant to me as he appears to be to thee, since thou speakest so hotly in his favour," said Geticus with a bow of mock humility. "I know not why I should go about singing his praises at such times as he is too busy to order me to be whipped."

"It is thine own fault. Even a father punishes his child when that child abuses his kindness as thou dost that of Lucius Menenius."

"Who says that?"

"The master himself. Only the other day I heard him tell Ninus——"

A fierce exclamation broke from the lips of Geticus, and a look of intense hatred distorted his handsome countenance.

"Thou art getting angry!" said Afra, shrinking away. "I am sorry that I have wounded thee. I must go."

"Stay!" said Geticus abruptly. "There is time enough for thy roses."

"I will stay if thou wilt calm thyself. How thou rollest thine eyes! Menenius did well to keep thee under lock and key for three days! Had not Ninus said a good word for thee, thou hadst still been in thy room! And thou mayest thank the gods that thou didst not kill the gardener; the stone chipped the bark off the tree—that is a witness to thy rage!"

"He angered me—would that I had killed him!" exclaimed Geticus, his anger rising again.

"I will hear no more!" said the indignant girl. "A fine reason, truly, for killing a man! Dost thou not believe in Jupiter and his vengeance?"

"Bah! I believe, but I know that forgiveness can be bought! The Egyptian priest, Seleucius, hath told me that the killing of an enemy is one of the sins for which

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pardon can be purchased. There is but one sin for which there is no forgiveness—the breaking of an oath! He who breaks his vow suffers the full penalty at the hands of Jupiter!"

"And thou believest that?" asked the maiden scornfully.

"Seleucius says so—ought not *he* to know what is right?"

"How camest thou to visit the Egyptian priest?"

"I will tell thee—in secret," replied Geticus. "I went to him with the young master, Caius."

"Methinks thou art more fond of accompanying Caius in his frivolous pleasure-seeking than of serving thy master honourably. Yet thou knowest how strict is Lucius Menenius!"

"Caius is my master as well as Lucius. Moreover, he hath promised that if I serve him well he will give me my freedom in two years! And then—oh, Afra! Why dost thou make my task so hard? Why dost thou treat me so coldly? Many months have flown since thou didst set my heart on fire with love for thee! Dost thou remember the happy day when together we plucked the figs on the Albanian estate? Thou wert so bewitching that my heart went out to thee, and I vowed that thou shouldst be my bride. And in two years I will claim thee, and thou also shalt be free! Come, give me a kiss in token of betrothal!"

His eyes burning with a fierce, passionate light, Geticus stepped towards her. But she shrank from him.

"I cannot," she murmured, growing pale.

"Thou canst not? What means this?"

"Geticus, it cannot be! Ask me no more, I pray thee!"

He seized her by the arm; his face twitched with passion.

"Thou lovest another!" he cried hoarsely.

"Thou hurtest me, Geticus! Unhand me! Art thou mad?"

"Yes! Mad with love of thee! Tell me all! By Jupiter, I swear that if thou dost not tell me his name now, thou wilt rue this day! I will kill him if I first hear his name from other lips than thine!"

Afra hesitated; the little colour left in her face died away, and she trembled with fear.

"If thou wilt swear not to harm him—swear it by the god Jupiter—I will tell thee," she said, after a pause.

Geticus was consumed with jealousy, and forgot the full significance of what he was doing. He took the oath and waited for her reply.

Afra buried her face in the roses.

"Ninus!" she said in a low voice.

A shrill laugh broke from the lips of the young man.

"Ninus!" he repeated contemptuously. "The Greek from Asia Minor! Half a barbarian! Lucius Menenius bought him only three months ago, and thou hast already thrown thyself at his feet! With his pretended learning he hath contrived to wheedle himself into favour with Lucius, and he hath turned thy head! Ho, ho! a man fifteen years thy senior, with a heavy face that can show no sign of love! Ninus——"

"Cease, cease!" commanded the girl, stung to the quick. "What care I if he be old or young; if his face show love or not? I know him to be noble, good, and kind. His 'pretended learning,' as thou callest it, hath enabled him to restore to health the wife of Lucius Menenius when other physicians had failed, and he hath thus saved Menenius himself from life-long despair. For this, Ninus will soon receive his freedom, and in addition, the rights of citizenship. What sayest thou to that? Go! Thou shalt never speak to me again until thou cravest his pardon."

And with a haughty look the girl walked away.

Geticus watched her until she had disappeared. Then he shook his clenched fist in the direction she had taken.

"Curse him!" he hissed. "She shall never wed him while I have breath—no, not if I have to kill him to prevent it!"

II.

AFTER his talk with Afra, when he had given expression to the feelings he had held in restraint for so long, and had been so bitterly disappointed, Geticus was animated by one all-absorbing thought. How could he thwart Afra's plans—how could he prevent this marriage? He was determined that Ninus should not have her; the bare idea filled him with ungovernable rage, and his hatred of the house doctor became so intense that it appeared a mere trifle to kill him. It would be no more sin to kill such a hypocrite than it would be to throw poisoned bread or meat to the rats in the cellar. All day long, all the next day, he revolved in his mind various plans for getting rid of his hated rival, and finally decided upon poisoning him.

Full of his deadly intention, he was thinking of the best way to administer the poison, when there flashed across his mind for the first time the remembrance of the oath he had taken! He had sworn not to injure Ninus—sworn it by Jupiter—and there would be no peace for him either in time or eternity if he broke that oath! Oh! fool that he had been to act so hastily. Ninus would marry Afra, and he could not prevent it. He fancied he saw it all, how they would both receive their freedom, and be loaded with presents by Lucius Menenius and his wife, in gratitude for what Ninus had done; how they would have the wedding feast in the xystus, Menenius and all the family, as well as the servants, partaking of it; how Ninus would afterwards carry off his beautiful bride. No! Never, *never!*

Only one other solution of the difficulty could he think of, but that he dismissed at once. It was to kill Afra and commit suicide.

So he tossed about all night in mental agony. The following morning the librarian gave him orders to carefully roll up the recent numbers of the *Acta Diurna*, and put them away in order of date. The *Acta Diurna* was the official newspaper of the city and the state; it was copied chiefly by slaves, and contained official news and notices, besides notes of news from all parts of the empire. As Geticus rolled each one up on the stick, he glanced at some of the items of interest, and, finding that it afforded relief to his aching head and throbbing brain, he continued to read here and there until he almost forgot his trouble.

Suddenly his eye lighted on an item which sent a thrill through him. He read it with flushed cheek and bated breath. The very thing! An expression of wild triumph appeared on his face, and he nearly cried out in his joy. The problem was solved; he could spoil their happiness and yet not break his oath!

He hastened to finish his task; all the numbers were stored away except one, and that one he hid under his tunic. Then he made his way to the dining-room where the chief slaves were partaking of the midday meal. Ninus and Afra were among the number.

Geticus threw a furtive glance at the doctor—a vengeful, triumphant glance which meant: "Wait a

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while and thy happiness will be destroyed!" But even at that moment he could not help noticing how well the lovers hid their feelings from the other slaves.

When the meal was finished he found an opportunity of speaking to Afra unnoticed by any of the others.

"I want a word with thee, Afra. Quite alone. Do not fail me, for thy life is at stake, I swear it by Jupiter! When and where wilt thou meet me?"

Afra looked at him. She saw by the wild look in his eyes that he meant what he said. She hesitated, but finally replied: "In one hour, at the spot where thou sawest me gathering roses."

"Good! Be punctual."

As Geticus passed out of the room he saw Ninus, who, noticing that the young man looked worried, asked in his usual kindly tone what ailed him. But the youth shut his mouth with a defiant air and walked away without a word.

The hour was nearly up when Geticus walked through the xystus on his way to the garden. Only one slave was in the xystus, a young woman with whom he had flirted occasionally. She did not hear him coming, and when he touched her on the shoulder she screamed and dropped her brush.

"Thou mightest have killed me with fright!" she exclaimed, turning red. "Why comest thou here?"

"Dost thou think that I come to make a declaration of love?" he asked with the least trace of a sneer. He scarcely knew why he made the remark, but he soon repented it.

"No, indeed!" replied the girl bitterly. "We all know that thou art consumed with love for Afra!" And she hurried away to hide her tears.

"Curse them all!" hissed Geticus. "They all know of my love for Afra. But I will have her yet! She must yield when she knows what I have planned to do, and I care not whether her heart is mine or not, so that I win her!"

They reached the appointed spot almost at the same time.

"Thou must hasten with thy communication," said Afra quietly. "I have but little time."

"A few minutes will suffice," returned Geticus. "Afra, thou shalt not marry Ninus! If thou dost not break off this match of thine own free will——"

"It is to tell me this thing that thou hast brought me here?"

"Yes! Listen to what I am about to read out of the *Acta Diurna*, and thou wilt understand why I said that thy life was at stake! Listen:

> 'It is generally known that Tullius Corvinus was murdered by one of his slaves at his country seat at Alsium a few days ago. Yesterday, in accordance with the old law, which has only been put into operation twice during the present century, all the slaves who were in the place at the time of the murder—seven—were put to death. Attacks of this kind are becoming more frequent, so the ancient law will be acted upon in every instance in future.'"

"What is the meaning of all that?" asked Afra indifferently.

"Think it out for thyself."

"I am unaccustomed to such mental exercises," said the girl impatiently

"Then I will make it clear to thee! Thou shalt never wed Ninus. I have sworn by Jupiter not to lay a hand upon him, so I cannot prevent it in the way I desire! I have not the courage to kill thee, as thou deservest. This, then, is what I will do if thou dost not at once—at once, dost thou hear?—if thou dost not give up Ninus and promise to be mine!"

He had seized her by the wrist, and she turned pale and shrank back as he drew a long dagger from under his tunic.

"Fear not!" he exclaimed. "I have not the courage to hurt thee. Afra, oh! Afra, why dost thou torture me thus? Give me but a word—one little word—of hope!"

"Geticus," she said softly, gaining courage, "can I answer for my heart? If thou didst but know Ninus as I know him——"

He stopped her with a gesture of impatience.

"Listen! Thou seest this blade? It is good Syrian steel.—I verily believe it would cut through iron! If thou wilt not give up Ninus and promise to be mine, I will plunge this blade up to the hilt in the heart of Lucius Menenius! Dost thou understand what that means for thee and thy barbarian lover? Ha! ha! A fine end truly—the headsman's axe!"

"Thou monster!" gasped Afra. "It is thus that thou thinkest to rob me of my happiness! Dost thou think that I would wed one so vile as thou? Dost thou imagine that thou canst frighten me thus into doing what thou desirest? Never!"

"Think of the headsman's axe! Think of the innocent who will suffer by thy obstinacy."

"I do think of them, and I curse thee for thy wickedness!" cried Afra in despair. "But thou shalt not do it; I will scream for help!"

She sprang upon him and seized the hand that held the knife.

"Help, help!" she screamed at the top of her voice as with almost superhuman strength she grappled with him, and tried to force him to drop the dagger.

"Fool!" hissed Geticus, as he struggled vainly to free himself. "So that is thine answer! Then the consequences be upon thy head!"

"Help, help!" screamed Afra again, as they struggled fiercely about the path, the one trying to free his hand, the other endeavouring to gain possession of the weapon.

"What means this?" said an earnest voice near them. And Lucius Menenius, a look of amazement on his face, hurried towards them.

"Take care, my lord," cried Afra warningly, as she felt her strength giving way. "Geticus threatens thee with death! My lord, take care!"

Ere Lucius Menenius had time to comprehend the meaning of the struggle and Afra's warning, Geticus had freed himself from the girl's grasp and had thrown her to the ground.

"It is thy doing!" he raved, with a last look at Afra, and the next instant he had thrown himself with all his strength upon Lucius Menenius, and had plunged the dagger deep into his breast, himself receiving at the same moment a severe wound in the head from the iron stylus, which his master had raised in self-defence.

Menenius staggered a few steps, and then fell heavily upon the path, while Geticus, forgetting his original plan, rushed off, leaving the Syrian dagger in the breast of the murdered man.

III.

WHEN Afra roused herself and scrambled to her feet, she saw that Menenius was still breathing and was moving his arm as though to lift himself up. She flew past him towards the house, and shrieked aloud for help.

The old steward was the first to appear in answer to

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her cries; he was quickly followed by Ninus, whose skill at such a time was most necessary. Afra could not speak coherently; she beckoned to them to follow her, and led them to where their master lay.

"Geticus—attacked him. Oh! the monster!" was all she could say. She knelt by the side of Menenius, and cried to him to say one word.

"Good child!" murmured the dying man.

Ninus knelt by the side of Menenius and gently drew the knife from the wounded man's breast. He saw that there was no hope of saving Menenius; the wound was fatal.

Gently pushing aside Afra and the other slaves who had hurried to the spot, full of horror and grief, Ninus and Heliodorus, with the assistance of two of the male slaves, carried Menenius into the house and placed him upon the bed in his own room.

The old steward had gone off in search of Caius, so he said. But he had another object in leaving the house; he intended to fetch the guard. As a freeman, he had nothing to fear from the law, and was naturally more inclined to look at things from the master's point of view. Who knew that Geticus had attacked his master? Might not Afra's grief be mere pretence? He was not well disposed towards her, because she had perceived that he had a sneaking regard for her, and had laughed at him. He bore Ninus no goodwill, either; he was Latin to the backbone, and Ninus was Greek, and he was jealous of the favour with which Menenius looked upon the doctor. So he went for the soldiers.

In the meantime Ninus, quite unconscious of the consequences of Menenius's death for himself and his fellow-slaves, was doing his best to staunch the wound, and was rewarded by a whispered word of thanks.

"I am dying!" gasped Menenius after a pause. "I feel it! Oh, how did I wrong Geticus that he should——? My poor wife and daughter! Caius! Where is he?"

"He will be here soon, my lord. Keep quite still," said Ninus.

"Why hath Geticus done this?" groaned Menenius. "He has caused the death of you all!"

Afra bent down and whispered in his ear. In a few words she had explained all.

"I alone am to blame, my lord, and I will die willingly; but save Ninus! Oh, save Ninus!"

At that moment there was the rattle of arms and the tramp of soldiers in the house. The slaves looked at one another, and Ninus now for the first time realised the truth. He gently drew Afra away from Menenius, and pressed her to his heart.

"Be brave," he said; "thou art spotless, and needest not fear death. We will die together as we had hoped to live together!" and he imprinted a passionate kiss upon her hot lips.

At the sound of the approaching soldiers Lucius made a great effort and raised himself on his elbow. Ninus rushed towards him, put his arm around him, and tried to make him lie down again.

"No!" cried Menenius. "I will save you—and the others. Listen! They are coming to take you away. Give me your hand, Ninus. Afra, pray that the Gods may give me a few moment's grace."

The cries of the slaves, who were seized by the soldiers wherever they were found, resounded through the place.

"Bid the centurion come here," said Menenius, his voice apparently stronger than before.

Two minutes later the officer entered the room.

"Most noble Menenius," he said, bowing low, "I come in the name of Cæsar and the law. Art thou able to answer two or three questions?"

"Aye! And I can give thee some information which will render thy presence unnecessary. There is some misunderstanding here. No crime has been committed against me. It was an accident. Caius, my son, come here. Listen to what I say, and see that thy father's dying wishes are carried out. Centurion, thou seest that I have but a short time to live, and thou wilt not doubt the truth of my words. The blow dealt by the madman Geticus was not intended for me; it was for Ninus, the surgeon. Geticus wished to destroy his happiness, but the blow fell upon me. Dost hear, centurion? The blow was for Ninus, and the law takes no action!"

A dead silence followed this statement. Afra and Ninus both cast thankful glances at Menenius, who made another effort, and continued:

"Caius, it is my wish that Ninus and Afra receive their freedom. Swear to me that thou wilt give it to them!"

"Father, oh! father, I swear it!" cried the grief-stricken Caius.

"It is well! Go, centurion, and liberate the slaves, that they may breathe freely again ere I pass away!" gasped Menenius.

The centurion wished to put a question, but Menenius waved him away with a last expiring effort. A few seconds afterwards the noble Lucius Menenius breathed his last.

Caius fulfilled his father's wishes: Ninus and Afra received their freedom, and were soon afterwards married. Ninus could not bring himself to conceal the truth from Caius, who was at first astounded; but he soon perceived that the words which his father had uttered with his last breath, although not true in the literal sense, were true in the higher and nobler sense, and he was content.

What became of Geticus nobody knew until some months afterwards, when his body was found in a thicket a short distance from Rome; but how he came by his death remained a mystery.

G. D.

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A RETIRED BURGLAR'S REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE.

"ENTERING one night by a convenient cellar window a comfortable appearing house in a small town in the North," relates a retired burglar, "I found myself in due time in the drawing-room. I was pretty well tired out; I had been at work every night for a week, and hadn't been doing very well, either; I had come to this town to try the benefit of a change. I had only just got here, and I had my tools in my travelling bag with me. When I turned into the drawing-room of this house I saw over in one corner a table with some books and things on it, and alongside of it a very easy-looking high-backed chair. I set my lamp down on this table and my bag on the floor near by, and the chair looked so very comfortable that I thought I'd sit down myself just for a minute.

"The next thing I knew somebody clapped me on the shoulder, and I woke up very suddenly and stood up and saw standing in front of me, holding a lamp in his left hand, and holding out his right hand to me, a good-looking young man of twenty-five or so, who was saying to me in the heartiest sort of fashion:

"'Why, Uncle William, how in the name of goodness did you get in?'

"Now, just think what a fine cue that was!

"'Why,' says I, with the same hearty manner, 'I rung the front door bell for about three-quarters of an hour, I should say, but, maybe, I didn't ring it very loud, for really I hated to wake up anybody at this hour of night, and when nobody came I thought first I'd sit out on the steps till morning, but it was pretty cool out there, and then I found a cellar window that happened to be open, and I got in there just as easy as could be, and I thought I'd just sit here till morning, and I was comfortable enough, too.'

"As I was talking I stood with my back against the table, and put my hands on the edge of it, reaching for my lamp; I got it finally, and dropped it into my ulster pocket. Then I felt easier.

"'Well, we're jolly glad to see you; but we didn't expect you quite so early. I should have been looking out for you later, and then you wouldn't have had any trouble about getting in. The train was a little early, wasn't it?'

"'No-o,' I said, 'no, I don't think so.'

"'Well, you must be tired enough, anyhow,' said the young man, just a-beamin' with good nature, 'and I know you will want to go to bed. Come along. Just let me take your bag;' and he reached for it. But I said: 'Why, no; I can carry it just as well as you can.' I wouldn't have let him feel the heft of that bag for a good deal.

"Well, he started, and I followed him upstairs. He opened the door of a bedroom in the front of the house and stepped in, and I followed.

"'Looks familiar, hey?' says the young man, smiling, as he looked round.

"'Just as pleasant as ever,' says I, and then the young man said he hoped I'd sleep well, and shook hands again and said good-night and went out. Then I took my lamp out of my ulster pocket and set it down again, this time on the chest of drawers. I hadn't much more than set it down when I heard a knock on the door. I went and opened it. It was the young man back again.

"'Want anything?' he said.

"I told him 'not a thing,' and he said good-night again and went away.

"Well, I sat down and kept quiet for a while and looked about a little. It certainly was a very pleasant room, very comfortably and very nicely furnished; and just now the fresh bed-clothes were turned back invitingly. And there was considerable property worth carrying away; two or three silver bottles and a silver-backed brush, and some other knick-knacks, but I didn't touch a thing; I couldn't abuse such hospitality as that.

"The front window in this room opened on the roof of the verandah. After waiting about half an hour I opened this window and looked out. The roof was rather steep, and covered with slate; not the easiest footing in the world, but better than noisy tin. I shortened up the strap to my bag and hung it round my neck, and got out on the roof and sat down and crawled along slowly, making towards a corner so as to be sure of striking a post. I couldn't help thinking as I slid along that I seemed to be sort o' revolving round that verandah. I had come in by a window under the floor of it, and now I was going out by a window over the roof of it, and when I touched ground again I should have made a complete circuit. But when I had got about half-way down I had something else to think about; I heard a man coming along the road from the direction of the station, walking briskly; Uncle William, sure. He turned into the walk leading up to the house without slackening up a bit, with the air of a man who knew the way perfectly; Uncle William, sure enough.

"He stepped up the steps into the verandah and rang the door bell briskly and quite confident-like, but nobody came. When he'd waited a minute or too, he set his bag down kind o' hard; he was getting a little tired of waiting. Then he rang again. This time I heard somebody coming down the stairs and come up to the door inside and say:

"'Hallo, there!' It was the familiar voice of the young man who had welcomed me half an hour before.

"'Hello, Will,' said the man outside, and I could hear a little scrape on the floor of the verandah as he picked up his bag, expecting to walk straight in. But the door didn't open. Will, named after his uncle, no doubt, was evidently surprised.

"'Why, Uncle William,' he said, 'however did you get out?'

"'Get out!' said Uncle William—he was a little testy now, and beginning to get surprised himself—'I haven't been in yet. What's the matter with you, Will?'

"The nephew opened the door then, and let his uncle in, and shut and locked it behind him. Soon I heard them talking together, both at once; and then they went upstairs together, both very quiet; and it seems a waste o' words to say that then I slid down the post."

B. S. K.

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DEATH ✣ OR ✣ DISHONOUR.

Translated from the French of Sacher-Masoch.

THE battle had been raging for two hours. It was an autumn afternoon, obscured by fog; Poles and Mussulmans had hurled themselves upon one another with furious shock, and now men and horses were hid in clouds of mist and dust and smoke. The shrill neighing of the horses and the thunder of their hoofs mingled with the cries of the combatants, the rattling of the fusillade and the ringing clash of lance and sword.

Vainly the general, stationed on a hill on which he had planted his standard, tried to follow the combat. All that could give him a clue of the state of affairs was the continued flashes of the batteries of guns.

Nothing was to be seen in the whole expanse of the plain but one great red blur, illuminating with its fires the murky heavens, with here and there a riderless horse or a wounded man. The troops had scattered in isolated combats; friends and enemies, Poles, Cossacks, Turks, and Tartars were mingled as if themselves blown about by the tempest wind that sweeps down from the Ural across the Sarmatian plain, and makes the many coloured leaves dance about in a mad saraband.

The fog favoured the resistance of the Poles; without its veil they would have soon seen that they were fighting ten to one. Savage cries of "Allah!" rose now and then above the roar of the guns; arrows fell thick as hail; lances clashed against other lances; yataghans were crossed with other menacing curved blades.

Often the adversaries went at it with their hands, knifing one another with short blows; even the horses bit one another in the fury of combat. Here a trunkless head bounded into the air, and the horse dashed away in the fog, still bearing a decapitated corpse; there, a soldier, pinned to the ground by a lance, clutched desperately at the empty air.

All at once a savage hurrah sounded on the flanks and rear of the Polish army. A horde of Turks burst at a mad gallop from the forest and threw themselves between the Poles and the river. The general did not detect the danger until it was too late. On all sides arose the cry of "Treachery! Treachery!" and each turned to flee for his life, trying to gain the bridge across the river. Before engaging in battle the Staroste Tarnowski had proposed in the council of war not to attack the Turks until they had crossed the river. The fate that the Poles had reserved for the enemy became their own portion by a sudden turn of fortune.

Almost stunned by this brusque reverse, but in nowise losing his courage, the intrepid commander of the cavalry forced his scattered troops to turn back. He threw himself before the flying horsemen, stopping them with gestures and cries, and finally succeeded in rallying some hundreds of fugitives, with whom he hurled himself upon the Turks.

It was in vain. The field pieces of the Poles had already been taken, and all at once an immense fire flamed up behind the conquered army. The camp followers had set fire to the bridge. At sight of this the bravest gave up the struggle, each thought only of saving himself, and those who fell into the hands of the enemy let themselves be massacred without resistance. The general had perished in the *mêlée*, and soon his skin, stretched and dried, covered the head of a drum offered as a trophy to the Sultan.

Thousands of men had been massacred and mangled by the hoofs of horses; thousands of soldiers, made prisoners, were tied to the tails of horses and led away to slavery. Of those who succeeded in gaining the river the greater part were drowned, some, a mere handful—composed for the most part of Cossacks—reached the further bank, thanks to the vigour of their horses, and found themselves for the time being in safety.

Two lance thrusts had wounded the Staroste Tarnowski. Just then a stray bullet struck him, and he sank down upon his horse's neck like a marionette when the string that sustains it is broken. There was nobody to assist him except Godomine, his young Cossack servant. The latter, who had many times given his master proof of his fidelity and devotion, sought once more to save him.

A pasha, in a flowing robe of blood-red velvet bordered in sable, bore down with flapping rein upon the wounded man. With incomparable skill he threw towards the Staroste the nooze of his lasso, which instantly enfolded the neck of the Pole. He was about to choke him, and was already rejoicing in the conquest of so noble a slave, when the Cossack severed the cord with a stroke of his knife, and disappeared with his master into the mists that rolled through the valley.

All at once the Staroste's horse staggered and fell. The Cossack caught his master, threw him across his own saddle, and resumed his wild dash for the river.

They had already reached in their headlong course the edge of the willows that lined the river, when the Staroste signified a desire to leave the horse. He could go no further; he felt that the end was approaching.

The Cossack dismounted, took his well-beloved master in his arms and bore him to the nearest tree; there he unfastened his tunic, and tried to staunch the blood that trickled from his bare chest.

"Do not take so much trouble," said Tarnowski; "God is calling me."

"May His will be done!" murmured the Cossack; "but if that is the case, I will accompany you, my master, to Paradise."

"No, no!" said the Staroste with an effort, for his voice was beginning to fail him. "My wife—shall it be her fate to end her days in the seraglio of the Sultan? No, no!"

He took breath, spat out the blood that choked him, and looked long at the Cossack, as if he would read his very soul.

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Two riderless horses passed in their neighbourhood; one of them approached the dying man, neighed wistfully, and then, frightened, galloped away.

"Save yourself," continued the Starcste; "you alone of all my servitors I can trust as I would myself. Hasten home to Horgg; there, with your own hands, strangle my wife—'twere better so than that she become the prey of the Turks, 'twere better than to think that she will belong to another—so, no one shall have her."

Godomine looked at his master in awed astonishment.

"Do you comprehend?"

The Cossack made an affirmative sign with his head.

"You will carry out my command?"

Godomine nodded his head for the second time.

"Swear it to me."

The Cossack raised his hand and took the required oath.

"Good. Now I can die in peace, and you—go, and may God protect you!"

The Staroste fell back, and from his lips came a last orison. Then his eyes turned towards the north, like those of a man who, as he embarks upon a long voyage, casts a look upon his native land.

When the Pole had breathed his last, Godomine leapt into the saddle and urged his horse fiercely across the stream. A troop of Turks, coming up at full gallop, sent after the fleeing man a cloud of arrows; but none of them reached Godomine. He only turned his head disdainfully and spat towards them. When his horse had climbed the opposite bank, the animal, as if sharing his master's sentiment, shook his waving mane and neighed joyfully. The Cossack threw his horse into a gallop, and presently the field of battle and the torrent of fugitives disappeared, lost in the violet shadows.

A sparsely wooded country spread itself out before the Cossack. He made his way over the carpet of velvety green moss that lay beneath the beeches, oaks, and birches, which, growing, at generous intervals, were aligned in long avenues, spreading their great branches in all directions. The tops of these forest giants were so bushy that they hid the sky from sight, and only a few isolated rays of the sun flitted furtively through their foliage.

After having journeyed long under the fluttering leaves in the midst of the thousand noises of the forest, he slackened the pace of his foam-flecked steed. In this solitude the clamour of conflict could no longer be heard; one might almost have thought that there were no men upon the earth. The dry taps of the woodpecker, drilling with its beak the bark of the oak, or the cry of the vulture, alone was heard in that realm of peace.

It was night when Godomine, leaving behind him the wooded country, found himself amid the great marshes and pools of water, in whose calm surface was mirrored the pale light of the stars—little seas and lakes bordered with waving reeds. The intelligent Cossack horse advanced with much caution, now and then sounding with his hoof the treacherous soil. A pale mist rose in light clouds from beneath the earth, and about the horseman began the dance of the false fires of the marsh lights. The Cossack almost thought himself flying, like the Tsarewitch in the story, on the back of a winged wolf across the heavenly vault; above him floated the clouds, and all about twinkled the reflection of the stars.

It was not until the morning, on his arrival at a miserable village, that Godomine resolved to take a little rest. A dog greeted the unknown horseman with savage barking; a young girl in a short garment of sheepskin ran out, barefooted and with unbound hair, bearing upon her shoulders a yoke from which hung two buckets.

The Cossack helped her draw the water, and, in turn, she let him drink, and his horse as well. After that the young girl pastured her goats, and to appease his hunger he plucked and ate the berries that grew everywhere among the hedges. Then Godomine recounted to the frightened peasants all that had happened.

After a little he set out again, traversing fields and pastures, passing by villages and manors, saluted here by the peal of bells and there by the croaking of ravens that dotted the freshly harvested fields. And so he went on, hour after hour, across field and forest, moor and upland, never letting his horse rest an instant except at a spring or at the edge of a corn field.

Day was falling as he reached the sandy steppe on which was situated the estate of Horgg.

Already the chateau, locked in its belt of grey moss-covered walls, rose before him on a gently sloping hill. At the side of a road stood a cross, presenting to the passer-by the image of the dying Saviour. The windows of the castle gleamed in the first rays of the sun, and when Godomine arrived at the court the rooks greeted him from the height of the belfry with a discordant clamour.

The Cossack tied his horse in the court, mounted the narrow servant's stair, passed unnoticed through the ante-room, and heaved a profound sigh as he stopped before the door of the bed-chamber.

When he entered, a sort of rosy twilight flooded the great room. The sunlight came in, tempered by the curtains of the windows and of the bed that stood in the midst of the room, and on the Persian carpet which covered the floor, and on the bearskins of the bed it made shifting golden circles.

On the bed, half-hidden amid its snowy pillows and soft furs, lay a golden-haired woman of marvellous beauty.

The Cossack stopped before her, gazing on her with dumb emotion. One of the great blonde tresses of the Starostin flowed over her breast, uncoiled like a golden serpent guarding an enchanted treasurer; her gracious head, with its crimson half-opened lips, rested upon one of her arms; she breathed tranquilly, regularly, like a sleeping child, and the dazzling ermine on her gown, made of some soft stuff worked with gold, gently rose and fell in the even rhythm of her respiration. He felt pity for this beautiful young creature who slept so free from care, and it seemed to Godomine as if he felt the quickening of some new and unknown feeling, compassion, or love, that had just been born within his breast.

But his oath! he had sworn to make the wife follow her husband into the other world. Should he kill her in her sleep? Could he do it when she had opened her eyes? Ought she to pass away without a prayer?

No. He approached her slowly, nearer still, and pronounced her name aloud.

She sighed deeply and turned on her couch.

"My gracious lady."

She made another movement, and, lying on her back, she slowly opened her blue eyes wider and wider.

Godomine felt his heart beating.

"Oh, it is you," she murmured, and she quickly drew the coverings about her; "what is it? What has happened? Whence come you?"

"From the field of battle, Madame."

"Where is the Staroste, my husband?"

"Dead, Madame, dead; but, God be praised, Madame, he perished like a hero."

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The shocked Starostin stared fixedly at this bearer of evil tidings, but she did not weep.

"Dead," she murmured slowly.

"We lost the day," continued the Cossack, "and the conquering infidels are pursuing us—are at our heels now. You cannot, you must not, Madame, be their prey."

"Well, let us fly," cried the beautiful widow.

"The last wish of my master," continued Godomine, "was for you, and he enjoined me to——"

"To accompany me?"

"No, Madame, no——"

"What, then?"

"To kill you."

The Starostin stared at Godomine with terror; then she set to rubbing her eyes.

"No; I am not dreaming, I am awake. But you—you are mad."

"No, Madame; but I must obey."

"You will never execute such a command."

"I have sworn a sacred oath to the dying Staroste. Pray, Madame, for you are about to die."

"To die!" She drew herself up, and, proudly lifting her beautiful head, she said: "Am I then so powerless? Go, miserable varlet, or I——"

She was about to pull the bell rope to summon help when Godomine swiftly drew the poniard from his belt and severed the cord with a single stroke.

"Pray, before it is too late," said the Cossack slowly.

"But I do not wish to die," she moaned.

"Pray!"

"I do not wish to."

"Then may God pardon me."

And Godomine took in his arms the beautiful widow, who shuddered through all her body and menaced him with her eyes; in the right hand of the servitor the steel of the poniard gleamed ominously.

"Pity!" cried the Starostin.

"Pardon me what I have said in this mortal panic," she continued; "I was mad! You are not cruel, your heart is good, you will have pity on me!"

"Pray!"

"My God! Must such a command be executed?"

She began to weep and pray. A burning tear fell upon the bronzed hand of the Cossack. He shivered, and released his victim.

"Take all that I possess," said the Starostin suddenly. "Take this necklace——"

"You are very generous, Madame," responded Godomine, "but I will not betray my master."

"What do you wish then?" stammered the Starostin. "You wish my blood? Why? Rather take me living—take me, I belong to you—save me——"

"Fear God, Madame!" cried the startled peasant.

She threw herself upon Godomine's neck, making of her arms a lasso like that which the Tartars throw in battle, the noose of which paralyses its victims and makes of him a slave. Godomine fell on his knees and hid his face in the soft, white billows of the fur that fell about the Starostin's form.

"You are so strong, so handsome!" she murmured. "Do you not care for me?" She laughed softly. "Oh, I knew it, too—deny it if you dare."

Slowly she drew to her the Cossack's face, and kissed him full upon the lips.

"Have pity on me!" murmured the unhappy man. For all response the Starostin pressed him more closely to her, and covered his face with fiery kisses.

"Unloose me, Madame!" cried Godomine, "let me go! I have not the blood of Judas in my veins!"

"Life is just beginning for us," continued the snarer; "for us the future is all rose colour—for the dead, ashes and silence. Is it not good to live and love?"

"Pity!" cried the Starostin.

Again she sought to draw the Cossack towards her. But her very abandon finally capped the climax of Godomine's indignation, and gave him back his strength.

"Unloose me, woman!" he cried. "Demon, tempt me no further!"

And winding her golden tresses about his hand, he thrust his poniard into the Starostin's heart. She gave one cry, a convulsive tremor shook her beautiful form, and, with a rattle in the throat, she sank down dead.

The Cossack knelt down and prayed in silence.

When he had made the sign of the cross he arose. The oath to his master was accomplished, his wife was dead. Ah, but she was beautiful, even in death, stretched upon the billows of blood-dyed ermine and half covered by her heavy golden locks!

The Cossack made upon her the sign of the cross. Then he left the chamber of death, hastened down the narrow stair, and leapt into his saddle, with a cry to those who gathered about him: "Our master is dead! The infidels are upon us! Save yourselves who can!"

Indescribable confusion followed this announcement.

But the Cossack had passed the portals and was off at a mad gallop across fields and prairies, ditches and streams, his horse clearing all obstacles with mighty leaps. To see his wild career, one might have thought that the dead beauty rode behind him on the horse, lashing both horse and rider with her golden tresses.

Arrived on the steppes, surrounded by a green undulating sea of flower-dotted grasses on whose slender fronds the sunlight danced, the Cossack curbed his smoking horse to a walk.

Then he cast a profound sigh, and, lifting his head, gazed long into the face of the heavens, like one who, fearless of reproach, looks straight into the eyes of God.

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CONRAD'S ✣ LOVE ✣ STORY.

ON a summer evening, some ten years ago, a group of men sat round a table in the Café Louret, in the French quarters of New Orleans, sipping light wines and black coffee. They were a merry party, and a good story was told or a song sung between every round of drinks. The jolliest jester of them all was Jules Fougere, a young swell who sometimes painted, when luck was against him at the lottery, and who always had on hand a score of love affairs with pretty Creole women. He had just finished describing the dark hair and the dreamy black eyes of his newest lady love, when Paul Conrad, an artist, entered the café. Every man at the table knew Conrad well, and they called to him to join them.

"A story, Paul, a story!" cried one of the party, as Conrad said:

"Jules Fougere! You here? Pardon, I did not see you before, but, believe me, I am glad you are present. Yes, I will tell you a story, and it will be true."

Conrad addressed Fougere, and there was a peculiar emphasis to his words, but it was unnoticed, except by the man for whom they and their hidden meaning were intended. The Bohemian painter turned a trifle pale and emptied his wine glass at a gulp.

"I sold my last picture this morning," Conrad began, as he sipped the black coffee he had ordered, "and on my way home I planned a surprise for my wife. Some of you know my wife—my Juliet. You know how beautiful she is; you have seen her dark, dreamy eyes, but ah! you cannot know my love for her. Her voice is music to my soul! the light of her eyes guides my brush! my love for her is the inspiration of my life!

"In the jeweller's window I saw a beautiful necklace. The diamonds gleamed brighter than stars, and I said to myself: 'I will buy it for Juliet. It will make the love light shine in her eyes till the gems look pale. Yes, the diamond necklace shall be my present to my wife.' The price was more than half the price of my picture, but money was nothing to me when I thought of Juliet's happiness.

"With light steps and a happy heart I hastened home with the present. I hurried to Juliet's room and opened the door softly. Ah, the story does not interest you, my dear Fougere! Too many love affairs of your own to think of another man's love! But be patient to the end, and I promise the story shall interest you more than you think."

"I am deeply interested, Paul. Go on!"

Fougere grew a trifle paler, and others besides Conrad this time noticed that his hand trembled slightly as he raised his wineglass to his lips.

"I entered Juliet's room," Conrad went on, "but she did not meet me with open arms as was her custom. I glanced about the room. She was not there. Then the plan to surprise her with the pretty present came to mind. I would conceal it in the drawer of her dressing-case. She would find it when it was time to dress for dinner, and I would be there to see the glad sparkle in her eyes, to hear her exclamations of startled delight. Yes, I would surprise her, then she would prize the gift all the more.

"I hastened to the dressing-case, fearful she would return before I could hide the package. I opened the drawer, and there I found, not the dainty handkerchiefs of Juliet, but a picture, a photograph. Beneath the picture there was a letter, a letter to Juliet, my wife. I picked it up carefully, as one would touch a viper. I read it, words of love, words of passion, all addressed to her, to the woman I loved better than life. I saw the name; it was that of the man whose photograph I had found there with the letter.

"Ah, my dear Fougere, I see you are growing interested in my story!

"I put the letter back. Then I thought of the diamond necklace, the present I had bought for Juliet, the wife I loved. I threw it on the floor, I stamped on it; the glitter of the diamonds seemed to mock me; they were like serpents' eyes, and a serpent had entered my house. I took up the picture again. My brain was burning, but I wanted to look at that face once more, so I could not forget it.

"Then Juliet entered the room. At a glance she saw what I had discovered, and, falling on her knees at my feet, she confessed all and begged me to forgive. My love was dead, but there was no forgiveness in my heart. I looked down at the broken necklace; the gleaming diamonds were watching me, they seemed to laugh at my misery, and the pictured face of Juliet's lover smiled at me.

"I drew my dagger, and as she knelt there at my feet, I plunged it into the heart of Juliet, my wife, who was false to me!

"You start and grow pale, my dear Fougere! Does my story interest you so much? Stay, do not leave yet, the story is not finished.

"I ran from the house, leaving her dead there on the floor. Her blood stained the diamonds of the broken necklace. The picture and the dagger I brought with me. I have them now! See, here is the picture! 'Tis the handsome face of Jules Fougere! And here is the dagger! See the stain of blood on the blade there, and there! It is the blood of Juliet, my wife! The blade pierced her heart as it now pierces yours, Jules Fougere!"

With a lightning-like movement Conrad sprang forward and plunged the long blade of the dagger into the heart of his wife's lover, then turning to the horrified men round the table, he said quietly:

"Gentlemen, kindly call the police; I wish to give myself up!"

E. GARNET.

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Detective and Prisoner.

Two men sat together in the rear seat of a smoking-car on one of the American railways, and chatted familiarly of the ups and downs of a miner's life, the topic being suggested by a landscape dotted with coal breakers and furrowed with coal roads. The freedom and interest of their conversation did not seem to be dampened by the fact that the younger of the two carried a revolver, while his companion wore a pair of those uncoveted articles of jewellery which are known in criminal circles as "bracelets."

The few passengers who had observed them learnt from the confidential coloured porter that they were a noted detective and his prisoner on the way to trial.

As far as ages went the pair might have been taken for father and son, the fine grey head of the one contrasting strongly with the crisp brown curls of his captor.

What crime had been committed the porter did not know, but hazarded a conjecture that it must have been a pretty bad one or George Munsen wouldn't have took the trouble to put them things on his wrists. Presently the porter and the conductor satisfied the joint demands of etiquette and curiosity by stopping to exchange a few words with the detective; the former then perched himself upon the coal-box directly behind the prisoner, and the latter dropped magnificently into the seat in front. The train was sweeping round a curve and past a broken trestle on the hillside, at which both of the passengers looked with some interest.

"I remember that place," said the older man.

"So do I," responded the younger. "I was born there. Came near being buried there, too," he resumed, after a moment's pause.

"How was that?"

"It's a long story," said the detective, "but I guess we'll have time for it between this and the next station. Away up there on the slope is the little settlement where I made my *début*, so to speak; from it to the bottom of the hill there used to be a gravity road—a long winding track, reaching from the settlement down to the top of a blank wall of earth, where a slide occurred the year I was born. On both sides of the track grew saplings that had sprung up since the disaster (what I am telling you happened five years later), and they crowded the road, and hung over the old rusty rails on which the coal cars used to run.

"You must remember that the houses were built near the mouth of the pit—that was one of the first mines worked in this country and one of the first to be abandoned. The time I am telling you about some men were walking up the track, and a lot of children playing near the top, climbing in and out of an old car which had lain there since it made its last trip, with the broken spraggs still in its wheels. The men were miners, all but one of them, who questioned his companions about their work and the country they lived in. He was evidently a stranger—probably a newspaper man.

"Presently, as they talked, a shout from the top of the slope attracted their attention, and they looked up just in time to see the car begin to move slowly down the grade. There was an impatient exclamation from the oldest man in the party. 'Them brats is always up to some mischief,' he said. 'They have started that old thing off at last. I've been expecting to see it go, any time this five year. They'll be breaking their necks yet with their tomfooling.'

"And another of the group added: 'We must dust out of this lively, unless we want to get our own necks broke: she'll either jump the rail or go to pieces at the bottom; lucky there ain't no one on board of her.' The stranger was looking anxiously up at the approaching runaway. His quick eye caught sight of something round and golden above the black rim.

"'There's a child in that car,' he said quietly.

"It was a second or two before his companions realised the awful meaning of that statement. 'A child! That was as if he had said that in a few minutes someone—perhaps one of themselves—would be childless. With one impulse they turned to look at the broken rails by the edge of the fault. Shuddering, they fixed their eyes again on the approaching mass, then hopelessly on each other. They could not dream of stopping the progress of the car. But, quick as thought almost, the stranger took hold of a sapling and bent it down till it nearly touched the track. 'Hold it,' he said to one of the men, 'it will help to check her.'

"A rod further down another, and then a third and fourth were held in the same way. So four of the party waited for a few breathless seconds, while the two remaining ones hurried further down; but one more effort, and the car was upon them. The first obstacle

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was whipped out of the hands of the strong man who held it, and the car rushed on to the second with scarcely lessened force. Again the barrier was brushed aside, but this time the speed of the old wreck was perceptibly less. By the time the fifth obstruction was reached, the new comer was able to clamber aboard and throw the child into the arms of his companion, but before he had time to save himself the old truck had regained something of its momentum, and was plunging on towards the precipice.

"Well, the man jumped just as they reached the edge, just before the vehicle shot over into the air, but he had very little time to choose his ground, and so landed, as luck would have it, on the only heap of stones in sight. The others picked him up for dead, and carried him to the settlement, where the miners held a regular wake over him. But he came to life in the middle of the festiv—the obsequies, I mean—and it was found that he was only crippled for life.

"The miners, folks not easily moved, were enthusiastic about the affair.

"A mass meeting was held, and an orator addressed the crowd from the top of an overturned barrel.

An orator addressed the crowd from the top of an overturned barrel.

"They also gave such testimonials as they could to show their gratitude and appreciation.

"One of these expressions took the form of a souvenir, signed by every man in the place, and stating in very grandiloquent language what the poor fellow had done. His quick wit seemed to them more wonderful than his courage and devotion in a community where neither quality is unusual at all. The man who takes his own life in his hand every day, and has frequently to fight for the life of some companion, values a 'brainy' action. In the box with the testimonial was a purse of fifty dollars and a curious old gold cross, that had been treasured by the mother of the child that was saved, as her piece of finery. On it was rudely engraved these words:

"'Given by the miners at the Notch to the man who risked his life for a child.'

"That was all. The poor fellow went away, and would have been forgotten, only that the old miners told the story sometimes to their children."

The prisoner was looking out of the window. The conductor fussed about as though ashamed of the interest he had shown in the story—a story which he did not doubt was pure fiction. Only the porter gave way to his sympathy, and asked whether the man had ever appeared in those parts again.

"Not that I know of," replied the detective.

"And was you the boy what he saved?"

"I was the kid."

"And you never heard tell what became of the man? What would you do if you should come across him some time?" Evidently the porter had an imagination which was trying to assert itself.

"Oh, I'd try to even the thing up somehow. I suppose common decency would demand that. I'd treat him as well as I knew how."

"Look here," said the prisoner, turning from the window with an apparent effort to change a conversation which, for some reason, had not seemed to interest him, "look here, old man, I've got a little keepsake, that your story just reminded me of, and if I could get at it I'd ask you to take charge of it for me till—till the thing is over. If you'll put your hand in there and pull out that piece of ribbon, so——"

The conductor almost jumped out of his seat.

"Hanged if it ain't the cross that you've just been telling about!" he shouted.

A month later the detective was undergoing a cross-examination by the conductor and porter.

"Yes, he was a bad lot—oh, yes, he didn't have a leg to stand on; the facts were all as clear as day. All true about the cross and the rest of it? Just as true as gospel. What had he been doing? Throwing bombs the last thing. Punished? Well, to tell you the truth, they won't be apt to punish him till they catch him again. Fact is, he got away from me somehow that same night. Who, me? Oh, no. I'm not on the force any more; I've been bounced."

SILAS MACKAY.

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BRISK, THE AVENGER

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

THE widow of Paolo Saverini lived with her son in a poor little house on the ramparts of Bonifacio. The town, built on a spur of the mountain, seeming in places to hang suspended over the sea, faced across a narrow channel, that bristled with jagged rocks, the lower coast of Sardinia.

At its feet, a cut in the cliff, like a gigantic corridor, leading between precipitous walls up almost to the first house, served as a port for the Italian Sardinian fishing boats, and twice a month for the wheezy old steamer from Ajaccio.

On the white mountain side the group of houses made a spot yet more white. They look like the nests of wild birds, clinging to the rocks and looking down upon the terrible passage where few vessels dare venture.

The house of the widow Saverini, set upon the very edge of the cliff, has three windows that look upon the savage and desolate scene. She lived there alone with her son Antoine and their dog Brisk, a big, gaunt brute, with long shaggy hair, which accompanied Antoine on his hunting trips.

One evening, after a dispute, Antoine Saverini was killed with a treacherous knife thrust by Nicolas Ravolati, who fled that night to Sardinia.

When the old mother received the body of her son, which some neighbours brought to her, she did not cry, but remained for a long time staring at it motionless; then, extending her wrinkled hand above the corpse, she pledged to it the vendetta.

She wanted no neighbours to sit up with her, and shut herself up with her dead, keeping with her only the dog, which howled dolefully. Crouched at the foot of the bed, with its head towards its master's body and its tail pressed between its legs, the dog howled long and shrill, while the mother, leaning with fixed gaze over the corpse, wept silent tears.

The old woman began to speak. At the sound of her voice the dog was stilled.

"Go, go in peace. You shall be avenged, my little one, my boy. Sleep, sleep in peace. You shall be avenged, do you hear? Your mother promises it; and your mother always keeps her word, as you well know." And gently she leant forward and pressed her cold lips to the dead face.

Then Brisk began to whine with a monotonous heart-rending terrible sound.

They remained thus, the woman and the dog, until morning.

Antoine Saverini was buried the next day, and soon his name was heard no more in Bonifacio.

He had left neither brothers nor near cousins. No man was there to take up the vendetta. The mother alone thought of it, day and night.

Across the strait she saw, from morning to night, a white spec on the coast. It was a little village, Longosardo, where the Corsican bandits took refuge when hard pressed. They were almost the only inhabitants of the hamlet, and there, in sight of their native land, they awaited the moment when they could return to Corsica. In this village she knew Nicolas Ravolati had hidden himself.

All day long would she sit alone by her window, brooding on her vengeance. How could she accomplish it—alone, infirm, almost at death's door? But she had promised; she had sworn on the dead body. She could not forget, she could not wait. What should she do?

She no longer slept at night, she no longer knew rest nor respite, she thought always, seeking a means. The dog slept at her feet, now and again raising its head to howl mournfully. Since its master was no longer there it often howled thus, as if it would have called him—as if the brute's soul cherished a memory that nothing could efface.

But one night, as Brisk resumed his low howling, the mother had a sudden idea—the idea of a vindictive and ferocious savage. She mused over it till morning; then, rising before dawn, she betook herself to the church. She prayed, prostrate on the stone flags, imploring God to aid her, to sustain her, to give her poor, worn body strength to avenge her son.

Then she returned. She had in her yard an old cask with the head knocked out, which served to catch the rainwater from the eaves. She turned it over, emptied it, secured it to the ground with stakes and stones; then she chained Brisk to it and went indoors again alone.

She walked up and down in her chamber ceaselessly, now gazing always at Sardinia. He was over there, the assassin.

The dog howled all through the day and all that night. In the morning the old woman brought it water in a pan, but nothing more—not a bone, not a crust.

The day passed. Brisk, exhausted, slept. The next day its eyes shone, its hair bristled, and it tugged madly at the chain.

The old woman still gave it nothing to eat. The dog became furious, bayed in a hoarse tone. And so the night passed.

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Then, at break of day, the old woman went to a neighbour and borrowed a truss of straw. She then took some old garments, which her husband had worn, and stuffed them with straw to simulate a human body. Having driven a stake into the ground before Brisk's cask, she tied this mannikin upon it so that it seemed to be standing up. Then she fashioned the head out of a bundle of old cloth.

The dog, surprised, looked at this man of straw and was silent, although devoured with hunger.

Then the old woman went to the butcher's and bought a long string of sausages. Returning to her own house, she lit a fire near the kennel in the yard and broiled the sausages. The dog, famished, bounded about and foamed at the mouth, its eyes fixed on the sausages, the fumes of which drove it almost mad.

Then of these smoking sausages the old woman made a cravat for the man of straw. She fastened it firmly round the neck, as if to make it part of the straw figure. When this was done she unchained the dog.

With a mighty bound the beast seized the mannikin's throat, and, with its paws on its chest, began to rend it to pieces. It fell down, a bit of the prize in its jaws, then jumped again, forced its teeth into the cords, tore away some morsels of food, fell again, and leapt at it again ferociously. It carried away the face in great mouthfuls, rending it into strips with its long sharp teeth.

The old woman mutely watched it all, her eyes blazing. Then she chained up the beast again to his cask, starved it for two days, and recommenced this strange exercise.

For three months she trained it to this sort of struggle, to this repast won only by his fangs. She no longer chained the beast, but with a gesture set it at the mannikin. She finally taught it to tear it, to devour it, even though there was no food concealed in its throat. She presented it with the sausage afterwards as a reward.

As soon as the dog saw the mannikin it trembled, then turned to its mistress, who hissed "Go!" pointing with her finger.

When she judged the time had come, the widow Saverini went to confession one Sunday morning with ecstatic fervour; then, having assumed masculine garb, looking like a ragged old man, she made a bargain with a Sardinian fisherman, who took her, accompanied by her dog, to the other side of the strait.

She had a string of sausages in her bag. Brisk had been starved for two days. The old woman gave the beast a sniff of the fragrant food every now and then to excite it.

They reached Longosardo. She went to a baker's shop and asked to be directed to Nicolas Ravolati. He had resumed his old trade of carpentering, and was at work alone in the back of the shop.

The old woman pushed open the door and called loudly:

"Nicolas!"

He turned; then, loosing her dog, she cried to the trusty brute:

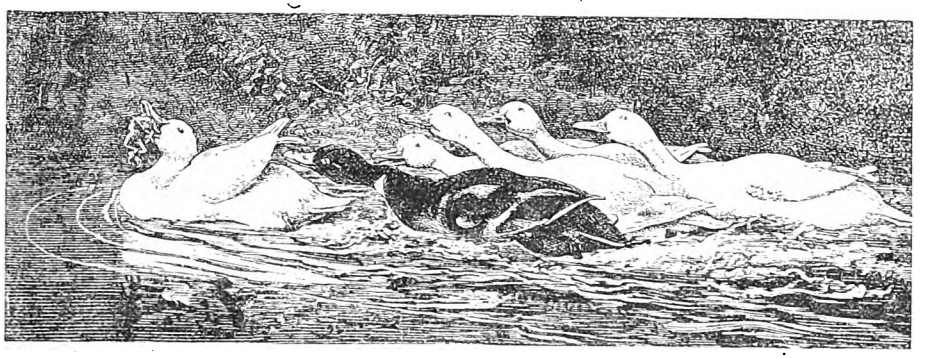
"Go; eat, tear, devour!"

The famished animal sprang and seized the man's throat. The man threw out his arms, seized the dog, and rolled upon the ground. For some seconds he struggled, his feet striking the earth. Then all was still, while Brisk tore his throat to ribbons.

Two neighbours, seated at their door, recall perfectly having seen an old man go out with a half starved dog, which, as it went, ate something which its master gave to it.

At evening the old woman reached her home. She slept well that night.

LE VIER.



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MR. JOHN WYLIE'S LITTLE PLAN.

MR. JOHN WYLIE was bitterly disappointed. He had been in the private inquiry business for over fifteen years, and never before had he experienced such a reverse. It was an affair that had attracted the greatest public interest and attention. A success in it would have established his reputation as a detective officer. But he had failed utterly and ignominiously.

This is how matters stood when he was called in by Sir Henry Heaviside to investigate it. On the 15th of November Sir Henry was away from home. On that night, his wife, Lady Helena, supported by her father, the Marquis of Doltshire, had given a little dinner, which was followed by a reception. Her ladyship had, as usual, been rather slow in dressing, and when the dinner-hour arrived she was greatly pressed for time. In her haste she had neglected to replace her jewels, which she intended to put on after dinner and previous to the reception, in the safe, and contented herself with locking the door of her boudoir and putting the key into a drawer in her bedroom. After dinner she found the key where she had left it, and reopened the door. On entering her boudoir she discovered to her amazement that the window was wide open. A moment's investigation showed her that all the jewels she had left upon her dressing-table when she hurried down to dinner were stolen. Their value was close upon seven thousand pounds.

This was, I repeat, how the matter stood when Mr. John Wylie was called in, and practically it was in the same state when, after six weeks' laborious investigation, he gave up the inquiry in despair. He suspected much, but he discovered nothing. It was clear to him that the robber, whoever he might be, was perfectly familiar with the house and with Lady Helena's careless ways. It was also clear to him that the window found open—which was twenty-five feet from the ground, and which showed no evidence of having been forced—was left open as a ruse to mislead the detectives.

He felt quite sure that the robber had entered the boudoir by means of Lady Helena's key, and that, if he left the house at all, he went out by a side door, which was fastened only by a spring lock. He was inclined, however, to believe that the thief was one of the household, and that the jewels were still in the house. Acting on this belief, he searched the house from top to bottom, examined all the servants' boxes and cupboards, and watched diligently all their movements; but, after six weeks thus employed, he had found nothing to implicate or even throw suspicion on any one in particular. He confessed himself utterly baffled.

As one day seated in his sanctum he was very mournfully turning over in his mind the question of his failure, there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," he cried out.

The door opened, and the office boy put in his head.

"Lady wants to see you, sir."

"Show her in."

The next moment a tall, stately, thickly-veiled lady was ushered into the detective's private office. Mr. Wylie offered her a seat, which was silently accepted. As soon as the door was shut again, she raised her veil and showed a handome, refined face. Then without much more ado, she introduced herself.

"I am Lady Moodie," she said, "wife of the banker of that name. And I have come here," her ladyship continued, "in very great trouble, to see if you can assist me."

"You may rely upon it, Madam," said the detective, "that I shall use my utmost efforts to do so."

"I will tell you," Lady Moodie went on, without noticing Mr. Wylie's remark, "the whole story as shortly as possible. Owing to my health, I had to winter last year in Florence. My husband's business and parliamentary duties would not permit him to join me. While living there by myself I met an Italian gentleman, with whom I formed rather an intimate friendship. You should know," she added hastily, "that there was nothing improper in it, though there was much that was imprudent."

"I quite believe you," said Mr. Wylie.

Lady Moodie seemed rather irritated than gratified by this assurance.

"Thinking," she continued, after a pause, "that he was an honourable man, I frequently wrote to him, and some of my letters—one or two of them, at any rate—would, I am afraid, bear to a jealous mind a very different meaning from that intended. When I returned home he followed me. By my influence he was received in Society here—not only so, but I assisted him from time to time with money. At last his demands became too extortionate, and I refused them. Then the miserable scoundrel turned upon me, and threatened that if I did not comply with his requests he would give the letters to my husband. He had mistaken his woman," Lady Moodie concluded passionately. "I would rather die than give a penny to the menaces of a coward!"

"May I know the gentleman's name?"

"Count Ulrici."

"Whew! The male professional beauty!"

Mr. Wylie, like everybody else, had heard of the Count. He was considered by all to be the best-looking, best-dressed, and best-mounted man to be seen in Rotten Row. He was reputed to be very rich, too, and it was this revelation as to the means by which he lived that astonished Mr. Wylie.

"I presume," said the detective, after a pause, "that you wish me to get possession of these letters?"

"Precisely," answered Lady Moodie.

Mr. Wylie reflected for some moments in silence, then he said:

"I really don't see how I can get them without committing a burglary."

"Couldn't you be induced to risk that?" asked Lady Moodie eagerly.

The detective started. Evidently her ladyship was not inclined to stick at trifles.

"Well, you see," said Mr. Wylie very deliberately, "burglary is rather a large order."

"I'm willing to pay anything to balk the coward," replied Lady Moodie fiercely.

"That's all right," answered Mr. Wylie; "but money's of little use to a man who's doing ten years."

At his words Lady Moodie's face became downcast. She was disappointed. Mr. Wylie noticed this.

"At any rate," he said to her, "let burglary be the last thing. We may be able to hit on some easier ex-

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pedient. Let me see now." And he reflected a moment. How many of those letters are there?"

"Some forty or fifty."

"Ah, so many? He couldn't, then, carry them about with him. Has he any servants?"

"Just one—a valet—an Italian, like himself."

"Hum. I wonder whether he could be bribed? Most Italians can. If I had a week or two to gain his confidence——"

"Impossible. If five thousand pounds be not given to Ulrici within a week the letters will be in my husband's hands."

"Oh, is that the case?"

"Yes; Sir Charles and I leave for Darklingbourne—that is our place in Doltshire—to-morrow, and the Count says that this day week he'll follow us, and that if on his arrival I don't give him that amount he will at once hand the letters to my husband."

"By Jupiter!" exclaimed Mr. Wylie, jumping excitedly to his feet. "By Jupiter, I have him! Excuse me, my lady," he added more calmly, "I think I see a way out of the maze. Do as you intended. Let him follow you to Darklingbourne, and if he presents himself to you there, defy him. You may do so with impunity, for he will have no letters to produce."

During the ensuing week Mr. Wylie kept a strict watch upon all the movements of the Count. He contrived, too, to discover a good deal regarding his past life and his future plans. He picked up an acquaintance with his valet, and from him discovered that his master intended to carry out his threat of going to Darklingbourne. The valet had orders to have his portmanteau ready, packed with everything necessary for a few days' stay from home.

On the evening preceeding the day on which he was to see Lady Moodie at Darklingbourne, Count Ulrici drove to Euston. Mr. Wylie, who had ascertained beforehand the train by which he intended to travel, was there awaiting him. The detective was disguised. He was an adept in that business, and now his own mother would not have known him. He had provided himself with a first-class ticket to Rottenborough, the station nearest to Sir Charles Moodie's seat.

The Count came to the station unaccompanied by his servant. Mr. Wylie noticed that his luggage consisted of a large portmanteau only—no doubt the one that the servant spoke of. It was marked on the side with the Count's initials "R.U." As it was too big to be taken conveniently into the carriage, its owner directed it to be placed in the luggage van.

Having marked well the portmanteau and the van into which it was put, Mr. Wylie took his seat in the train in a compartment not far from the Count's. When the train reached Willesden he got out and went into the refreshment-room. There he remained until the train had begun to move, when he rushed upon the platform too late to get in.

"Confound it!" he exclaimed, in affected vexation, "I'm left behind."

"Very sorry, sir," said a porter; "where are you for?"

"Rottenborough. When is the next train due?"

"No other train to-night, sir. You'll have to wait till four to-morrow morning."

"My gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Wylie, apparently much put out by the information, "what on earth am I to do? My luggage has gone on."

"Train stops at Harrow, sir. I'll telegraph there and have it sent back by the next train."

"Thank you; I wish you would. If I am to stop in town over-night I must have it."

"Very well, sir. What is your baggage like?"

"It is a large leather portmanteau, and was put into the through van for Rottenborough. They'll be able to distinguish it easily, as it has my initials on it."

"And they are, sir?"

"R. U."

The porter went off to telegraph, and the detective returned to the refreshment-room. There Mr. Wylie remained for some time, apparently absorbed in the consumption of a glass of beer, but really wondering what the result of his stratagem would be. He greatly feared lest the Count might notice his portmanteau being removed from the van, and instead of a message coming that the luggage would be sent back at once, one would arrive directing his arrest. So great was his anxiety on this point that it seemed to him hours before the porter turned up. Then, to his relief, he learnt that the portmanteau had been taken from the van at Harrow, and would be sent back by the next train.

When the next train arrived at Willesden the porter pointed out to him the returned portmanteau. Sure enough, it was Count Ulrici's. Letting it remain where it was, Mr. Wylie jumped into a compartment and proceeded with it to Euston.

At Euston, Mr. Wylie claimed the portmanteau, and boldly putting it on top of a cab, drove to King's Cross Station on the Underground Railway, and there he took a ticket to Charing Cross. Carefully choosing an empty compartment, he contrived during the course of his journey to effect a change in his disguise such that, while no more like himself than ever, he was still a very different looking man from the one who claimed the portmanteau at Willesden. When he arrived at Charing Cross it was quite dark, and there were few people about. Taking the heavy portmanteau in his hand, he carried it himself from the station to his office in Duke Street.

The moment he got safely into his private office he produced a bunch of skeleton keys and set about picking the lock. Succeding in this, he eagerly searched through the articles in the bag for the letters he wanted. To his chagrin, he could discover no trace of them. Over and over again he searched the contents, but each time with the same result. At length he paused in his work, almost fainting with anxiety and disappointment.

"Another failure," he said to himself, "and a worse one than before." As he spoke he continued aimlessly turning over the portmanteau's contents. "What a fop the fellow is!" he exclaimed. "Why, half of his luggage is brushes! And now that I notice it, what strange brushes they are! What heavy backs they have!"

The backs of the brushes certainly looked very thick, and when Mr. Wylie examined them closely he found that they were even thicker than they looked, for the hair in the centre was much shorter than at the sides, and the backs, therefore, must be deeper there. Indeed, they looked so suspicious that the detective at once began to try to see if they did not open in some way or other. He soon discovered that they did. The top scale of polished wood ran in a kind of groove, and was easily moveable. He pulled it back, and there in the middle was a hollow space crushed full of letters. Trembling with excitement, he lifted them out and looked at them. To his delight they were the very ones he was in search of.

There were two cases, each containing two brushes. In the first brush he opened there were sixteen letters from Lady Moodie; in the second there were fifteen. These were all in English. The brushes in the other

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case had also moveable backs, and contained letters, but a glance at the handwriting showed him very plainly that they were not Lady Moodie's.

He glanced rapidly over the letters. Their contents were of the most innocent character, mere commonplace congratulations and inquiries, such as a friend would write to a friend.

"I don't see," said the detective to himself, "why she should be afraid of her husband getting these. But she said there were more than forty of them, and there are only about thirty here. Let me see. By Jove, I have it! She told me there were only a few that were of a doubtful character. It is just those few that he has in his pocket, and I've failed again!"

He sat silent and still for a moment, dazed by this discovery, but he quickly regained his habitual coolness and decision.

"Well," he said, "I may as well see what the other letters are about."

He began rapidly to read them. They were in various handwritings, but most of them in one he somehow or other thought he had seen before. These letters were simply signed with an "H," and were couched in the most affectionate terms.

"I wonder who this 'H' can be?" he said. "She's evidently very much gone on the Count, and no mistake. There's a 'love' or a 'darling' for every other word. Here's an invitation for the 15th; how sweet it is. But here is one in which she has gone farther than the 'H.' It is signed 'Helena.' Now, I wonder who 'Helena' is? Hullo, what's this? A letter from a man, and signed 'Svendeleri'—the old Jewish money lender and receiver of stolen goods. That, at all events, looks suspicious."

He read the letter over carefully. When he had finished it he lay back in his chair and drew a long breath.

"Good Heavens!" he said, when he had recovered his composure, "this is a discovery! Was there ever anything so fortunate? I'm off by the morning train, and our friend will be safely in quod before he has a chance of seeing Sir Charles. But stay, it isn't quite so simple as I thought. I must account for the way I came by this paper, which will be difficult. Beside, I'm not sure it will be evidence against him unless it's found in his possession. Let me see."

He paused and reflected. Then, after a few moments, with a cry of triumph, he set to work replacing the contents of the bag. When everything was in it except the letter from Svendeleri and Lady Moodie's correspondence, he selected about ten of the most innocent of her letters, and, replacing the remainder in the backs of the brushes, locked up the portmanteau. Then he placed Svendeleri's letter in one of Lady Moodie's, put them in his pocket, restored his disguise to what it was when he claimed the Count's luggage, and taking the portmanteau in his hand, left the office. When he reached the Strand he called a cab and drove to Euston. At Euston he asked for the station-master.

"This I find," said the detective to him, "is not my portmanteau, after all. I thought it was at first, as it has my initials on the side and is about the same size, but I find that my key won't go into the lock, so it can't be mine."

"No, sir, it isn't yours," replied the station-master; "it is Count Ulrici's. He's been kicking up an awful row about it. We've had half-a-dozen telegrams from Rottenborough already. I'm glad it's recovered. What about your own, sir?"

"That's the question. You had better telegraph down the line about it. It must have been put out at one of the stations the five o'clock train called at. I'll call and hear what news you have to-morrow. Good-night."

Before four o'clock the next morning Mr. John Wylie was at Euston, not disguised this time, but in his usual costume. He took a ticket by the first train for Rottenborough, where he arrived about eight. After swallowing a hasty breakfast at the hotel in that interesting town, he obtained a cab and drove to Darklingbourne. There he inquired for Sir Charles Moodie. Sir Charles at once saw him.

He informed Sir Charles that he was a detective. He had long, he said, been shadowing a foreigner who was suspected of a great crime, and who, he learnt lately, was about to try to levy blackmail upon Sir Charles by pretending to have letters from Lady Moodie which reflected upon her reputation. He was anxious to have a talk with this gentleman in an unsuspected character, in order to try and obtain some unguarded statements from him. He begged Sir Charles to allow him to represent himself as Sir Charles when the scoundrel came to the house. The baronet seemed very adverse to such a course, but Lady Moodie, who was called in for a consultation, so strongly supported it that at last he was induced to consent.

About midday Count Ulrici arrived. He sent up his card to Lady Moodie, but she refused to see him. Then he asked for Sir Charles. He was at once shown into the library, where the detective was. The Count had never seen Sir Charles, who, involved in business cares, seldom went into gay company with his wife.

The Count at once proceeded to business in the coolest and most impudent manner. He had no diffidence or hesitation about stating what sort of relations he wished Sir Charles to believe had existed between him and Lady Moodie. He said he had letters in her handwriting to prove the truth of his statements.

"Show them to me," said the detective.

The Count handed over the letters. After looking at them for a moment, Mr. Wylie proceeded to read them one by one. When he had finished he paused, and said very coolly:

"I see nothing incriminating in these against Lady Moodie. They are all of the most innocent description. But what is this?" And he held up Svendeleri's letter.

The Count turned deadly pale.

"Can I have made a mistake?" he muttered.

"I am afraid you have," said Mr. Wylie, and he touched a bell.

As he did so the Count sprung madly upon him. There was a moment's fierce struggle, but before the Italian could overcome Mr. Wylie, Sir Charles and a servant rushed into the room and seized him.

"Too late, my hearty," said the detective to the Count. "Look, Sir Charles, these are the letters he received from Lady Moodie; more innocent notes woman never penned. And see what I have discovered among them—a letter from that Jewish scoundrel Svendeleri, offering £2,000 for the Heaviside diamonds, which were stolen about two months ago. There stands the thief!"

"What!" exclaimed the Count, "you're not Sir Charles Moodie?"

"No; I'm John Wylie, private detective, at your service."

"What a fool I was," exclaimed the Count, "not to see how it came about that my luggage went wrong."

N. N.

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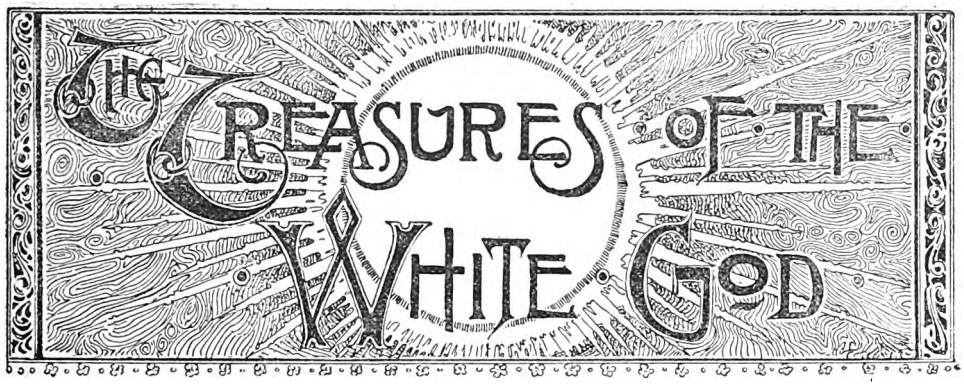

The Story of a Shameful Crime.

SUMMARY.

ROBERT LANE, escaped convict No. 407, *alias* Adrian Burgoyne is tracked to the World's Fair Grounds at Chicago. He is last seen, after an exciting chase by Mr. Inspector Grey and his assistant, Detective Dean, locked in a burning boat on the lake. Detective Dean finds a cipher in the convict's bed, which he sells to Mr. Richard Sheldon for £2,000. A Col. Lytle calls on Sheldon. They recall Burgoyne's history as follows: Ralph Ringold, when dying in Mexico left a packet containing £6,000 in the hands of Burgoyne for his friend Richard Sheldon, whom he appointed guardian of his daughter Patrice's fortune. Burgoyne overheard Lytle and Sheldon arranging to appropriate the treasure, and threatened to expose them. They caused him to be convicted of a crime, and sentenced to penal servitude for life.

They then discovered, when too late, that he had with him in cipher the secret to Ralf Ringold's hidden fortune and treasures in Mexico.

The cipher is now in their possession, but Patrice Ringold has the key.

Adrian Burgoyne escapes from the burning boat. He meets with a severe accident, which disfigures him beyond identity.

Richard Sheldon visits Patrice to obtain the key to the cipher. This, however, she had dropped the day before on the cliff, with her Bible. She hastens off to find it.

She falls over the cliff, but is rescued by Adrian Burgoyne. Startled by the sudden sight of Col. Lytle, he himself loses his balance and falls. He checks himself, however, and discovers the lost Bible of Patrice. He carelessly throws away the loose cover, and visits Patrice. He tells her of all he has gone through, and shows her a copy of the cipher which fell into Detective Dean's hands tattooed on his arm. He is rewarded by the words of Patrice: "*I adore you!*"

CHAPTER XIV.

MISSING!

ONCE in a lifetime Heaven sends some gleam of joy that overshadows all other experiences. To Adrian Burgoyne that rare flitting moment of happiness supreme had come.

"*I adore you!*" The outpouring of a young impetuous soul, free from guile as that of an angel, charmed, fascinated by the wonderful picture of fidelity presented by the hero martyr before her, that utterance was the grateful spontaneous expression of a heart true, tender, and loving beyond compare.

Adrian Burgoyne reeled for joy; he stretched out his eager hand towards Patrice to deter the homage that he felt was due from himself to her—perhaps to pour forth the story of the ardent love with which her beautiful face and the revelation of her true, womanly soul inspired him.

But Patrice had disappeared from the window, coy, abashed at being betrayed into an expression of her vivid emotion; startled slightly, too, Burgoyne adjudged, for the single, quickly uttered, warning-toned word quivered on the air.

"Hasten!"

He turned to leave the spot, with a wild, fierce joy untrammelled, because perfect trust and innocence had spoken, and he knew their deep sincerity; jealously active, for he was ever battling back the haunting thought that he was an ex-convict; that he did not stand on the plain, even basis of ordinary men.

Gliding past a tall lilac bush, he halted. The aroma of fine burning tobacco was borne towards him. Glancing at the front of the house, he saw a glowing point of light—the end of a cigar—and its flare partially revealed its possessor's identity.

"Lytle!" breathed Burgoyne, in an intense tone of voice. "Did he overhear us? Scarcely; but he is coming this way."

Lytle's indolent pose indicated little of the curious or excited lurker. On the contrary, it was evident that he was strolling casually about the garden, that he had just left the house, and that he was entirely unaware and unsuspicious of the absorbing and important interview that had just so strangely taken place at the open window of Patrice Ringold's room.

The lilac lay directly in his path. Its sparse verdure barely sheltered the crouching Burgoyne at a distance. Should he pass directly by it, he could not help noticing the intruder in the garden.

Anticipating and determined to evade a meeting at short range, Burgoyne acted promptly.

He darted from his covert and across the garden beds. Speeding, lithe as a deer, to the fence, he scaled it.

A single glance backward showed Lytle motionless, much in the pose of a surprised animal taken off its guard, peering after the fugitive, and giving utterance to a prolonged suspicious "Ah!"

Had he recognised him, or connected him in any way with the man of the cliffs? Would he suspect that he had been a visitor to the cottage—a surreptitious one?

"Let him think what he likes, he cannot overtake me," murmured Burgoyne recklessly. "Soon I will return; soon Patrice shall be removed, for ever safe from the menace of

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his baleful power. Oh, sweet one! dear one; the very light of Heaven has come into my broken, joyless life!"

He trod on air, he felt equal to a conflict with leagued giants. The past was a dark abyss to forget. The future, golden winged, ecstatic, seemed all illumined with hope and happiness under the glamour and glow of love, sweet love.

She loved him! He could understand how that pure soul, reading his own through eyes untrammelled with earthly taint or selfishness, had passed by his scarred and acid-changed face, and, through the windows of his heart, her eyes had read the true worth of courage and devotion that made him a hero, a lover to cherish in her ardent, impetuous sight.

"The cover to the Bible," soliloquised Burgoyne, as he ran on fleetly. "How strange, how careless, that I should cast aside a treasure, the one-important clue to all the Ringold secret! But it is safe—oh! it must be safe. Who would pick it up, or, doing so, would think of exploring its soaked, matted surface, any more than myself? It was near a little school-house, in the playground, that I flung it away. I shall find it there. Then to hasten a return to the cottage. Patrice will be ready, awaiting me. I will convey her to some remote town, as far away from those villains as my means will allow. I will place her in safe, motherly hands. Then a brief adieu, and, inspired by her love, I start out, single-handed but confident, to win the battle of right against wrong, to secure for her the fortune hidden away—the tattooed chronicle, the cipher alphabet key will tell where."

Burgoyne found the little white frame school-house at last, after a vexatious delay, for he was comparatively unfamiliar with the district, and lost time pursuing a wrong road. He crossed the playground as he had done that morning. He ransacked his mind for a clear memory of the abandonment of the Bible cover.

Somewhere, in crossing that broad expanse of lawn, he had cast the precious cover away. Where? He found himself utterly unable to decide upon the exact spot, but he began searching the ground in every direction.

Over it once, over it twice, he crept on hands and knees. No result. He began to tremble. Was the precious secret to elude his grasp? Had some careless school-boy made it a target for a football kick? Could it be possible that it had fallen into hands friendly to his enemies?

"If only I had a lantern," he decided finally, "I could search more systematically. There is a house over beyond the road. I will see if I can secure a light there. An hour lost—more," continued Burgoyne, hastening his steps with vivid concern. "I must return to Patrice. Every moment may be vital, but the Bible cover first. To lose that means beggary for her."

He quickened his pace to a run, planning a rapid return. A swift march over the playground, and a prompt dash for the cottage, and the cover would be found.

Just at the road, however, he came to a halt, with a vivid shock.

It was where a diverging line ran towards the village and past the Loring cottage. Just at his hand he had noticed the glow of a light, and, peering closer, he discerned the outlines of a vehicle, with two pawing, spirited steeds attached.

Upon the driver's seat sat a grim figure; the carriage door was open, and just at that moment, at a rustle in the shrubbery lining the road, two forms—one hurrying, the other reluctant—stepped into view.

"Here is the carriage," spoke the former of the twain.

"A man! Lytle; the midnight carriage!" gasped Burgoyne with a violent start. "I begin to understand!"

He was about to rush forward impetuously, when a thrilling voice checked him.

The companion of Colonel Lytle, drawing back free from his detaining grasp, shrank timorously.

"Why have you brought me here?" she cried. "You said you wished to give me some instructions from my guardian, Richard Sheldon, and——"

"I intend to take you to him, instead!" answered Lytle, suddenly seizing the girl, and dragging her towards the open door of the vehicle.

"I will not go! I will not go!" shrieked Patrice, wildly struggling in Lytle's grasp like a fluttering dove in the net of the fowler. "Mrs. Loring—*Adrian!* Help! help!"

CHAPTER XV.

KIDNAPPED.

AMID her fervent terror and helplessness, Patrice Ringold had well-nigh betrayed the identity of the man who lingered so near to her that he could have touched her flowing tresses of gold.

For an instant, the mandate of the sweet lips framing his name for the first time acted upon the impetuous Burgoyne as would a battle-cry to a valiant knight. With one blow he could send the scoundrel, Lytle, sprawling at his feet. A flash of prudence, of caution, stayed his impulse, however, and, as Lytle spoke, curiosity to learn if he had noticed what Patrice said, held Adrian Burgoyne's clenched hand in abeyance.

Apparently the schemer had not caught the word that would have aroused his keenest suspicions, amid Patrice's incoherent utterances.

"Stop!" he ordered with a savage scowl. "You can gain nothing by alarming others. I appear here as the authorised agent of your relative, Richard Sheldon. I am taking you to him——"

"I will not go! You cannot compel me!" panted Patrice wildly.

"Yes, I can. I have the legal power, girl!" And Lytle glowered down into the fine, shrinking face darkly. "You have deceived me."

"I—oh! let me go! You frighten—you terrify me!"

"It may well be so. You are playing a double game, and I know it!" hissed Lytle menacingly. "You pretend to have lost the alphabet key. I doubt it. Even if so, you can remember it, if you would. You have some friend, some lover, who is in a secret scheme with you to defeat my plans, for I saw a man skulking in the garden an hour ago, and that hastened my departure. You *will* tell the truth, however! Once Sheldon demands it, you will reveal what you know—what you are hiding from us—or he will make you wish you had. Into the carriage, I say! Sheldon shall decide this muddle. In with you!"

Slam.

"Drive on!"

Crack! went the driver's whip. The spirited steeds sprang from their haunches. Adrian Burgoyne started forward with a gasp of dismay, a moment too late.

So quickly had Lytle forced Patrice into the carriage, sprung in himself, slammed the door of the vehicle to, and given the order to the driver to start, that Burgoyne, about to dart forward and rescue the struggling girl, was grazed by the whirling wheels, and brushed, unnoticed and baffled, to one side.

The frantic shriek for help of the kidnappped girl mingled with the grinding of the wheels and the clattering hoofs of the horses.

"He is taking her away to torture, to imprison her, to wrest her secret from her lips!" gasped Burgoyne in alarm. "It shall not be. The driver is in his pay, a mute, faithful ally; but, ten to one, or ten against one, I will balk his designs!"

Down the smooth, hard country road, in pursuit of the fast-disappearing vehicle, sped Burgoyne. The practised steeds seemed to fairly fly on their course. They outdistanced the runner, expert and determined as he was, and, turning a curve in the road, were lost to sight finally, their

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echoing hoofs, beating out a swift flight, being the only reminder of even their remote proximity.

Still the pursuer kept on. He was gasping for breath now, wild-eyed, frantic, in despair. He must not lose trace of Lytle! Such men plotted to succeed, and once again imprisoned in some safe retreat, he would have all the difficult work of finding Patrice once more to do.

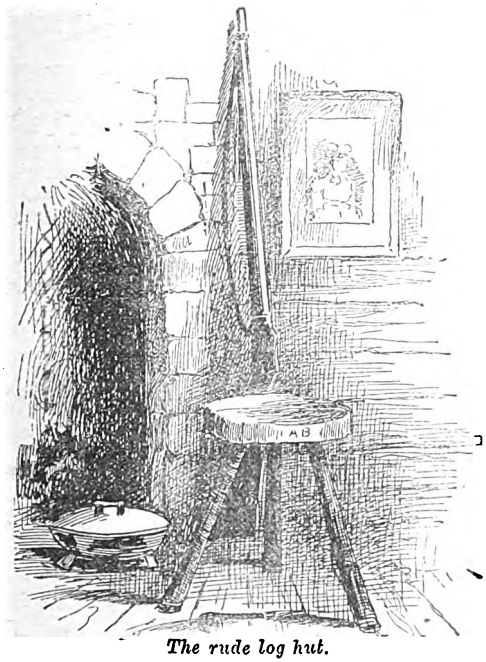
Besides, she was no match for such deft schemers. In an inadvertent moment she might drop a hint as to his escape, and the meshes of the law would again close about him.

For an hour Burgoyne sped on. He was forced to rest twice from sheer exhaustion. Just as he turned a curve in the highway he uttered a joyful cry.

A few hundred yards ahead, and about to strike off into a road leading through a dense belt of timber to the lights of a distant hamlet, he made out the carriage he had shadowed.

A broken trace had delayed it, and patching it up, the driver was making for the nearest town, to secure a new one.

Burgoyne dashed ahead at a new spurt of speed. A grim,



The rude log hut.

resolute glitter shone in his eye, as at last his hands closed round the rear bar of the vehicle.

It was a closed carriage. Even the conventional little back window was not present. As he clung there, and ran along to keep pace with the carriage, he heard the low, pitiful moans of one of its occupants.

Poor Patrice, unheeded, and unhindered by her grim, watchful captor, lay back among the cushions, wailing despairingly.

The utterance fired the heart of her companion to renewed zeal and determination. Desperate resources were called for. Once the hamlet ahead was reached, a renewal of the former rapid progress of the vehicle would defeat all plans of pursuit or attack.

Force must be met with force. Upon the issue of the passing hour depended all his own future, as well as that of the stricken, terrified creature whose sighs pierced his heart like a searing, red-hot iron!

With a light spring, Burgoyne lifted himself clear of the ground, and secured a foothold on the rear axle, a firm clasp across the top of the carriage.

Clinging there, he peered ahead.

The driver, absorbed in directing his horses safely down the brambly, branch-sheltered road, was too intent on his task to notice him.

Burgoyne formed a speedy plan of procedure. He would climb noiselessly over the top of the vehicle, reach the driver's seat encircle his neck with one arm, suddenly choke and menace him to silence and submission, gag and secure him, stop the horses, boldly attack the villain within the vehicle, and rescue and fly with Patrice.

It was the one desperate, the only means of accomplishing a tangible result—by force and strategy.

He crept over the glassy roof of the carriage. It swayed into a rut and out of it at that moment, starting up the horses, but Burgoyne preserved a safe equilibrium.

He reached out one hand to grasp the driver round the neck.

Just then an unforeseen accident occurred.

He felt the horses spring forward. He saw the driver evade his clutch by suddenly ducking down his head.

Not to escape him, however. No; the driver was blissfully ignorant of the free passenger he was carrying along the rutty, unfrequented road.

An overhanging branch had brushed dangerously near to the top of the carriage, and he saw it in time, and it barely swept clear of his head.

Too late, Adrian Burgoyne saw it also. He tried to evade it, was caught by it, swept along by it, hurled over the back of the carriage, struck the ground with a thud.

Then he knew no more, and the carriage sped forward, leaving the brave but baffled champion of a loved one's cause bleeding, senseless, and unnoticed in the middle of the dark and lonely country road.

CHAPTER XVI.

FOUND.

AN hour of paradise—a lifetime in an abyss of despair!

Slowly through the confused, aching brain of Adrian Burgoyne that sentiment forced its way with the first waking moment of consciousness and reason.

All, all was lost! The woman he loved was in the power of bold, unscrupulous enemies, the precious key to the enigma of the secret cipher was gone, he himself lay helpless among strangers; all the bright promises of that fervent, delightful hour that he had passed learning to worship the purity, the beauty, the devotion of Patrice Ringold, had vanished into the blackest gulf of hollow, haunting misery.

Where was he? What space of time had elapsed since he had striven to rescue the kipnapped Patrice, and had been swept from the roof of the speeding carriage, like a leaf in the storm.

He projected the query vaguely, aloud, but in a weak, pained tone, and he opened his eyes, as the response came promptly, to view the walls of a rude log hut, and its ruder inmate, a brawny, honest-faced man, sharpening an axe at the hearth.

"You're in my bunk, which I've slept on the floor in consequence," came the bluff, candid avowal. "My daughter has been looking after you as well as doing her other work. Not that I mind it, partner—I ain't quite that heartless—only you've been at it day and night, nearly until yesterday, and I couldn't sleep even there."

"At what?" asked Burgoyne vaguely.

"Raving—stark staring delirious. First it was gaol—then a boat—then a gal. My! how you did carry on about that gal! Better?"

A shade of anxiety crossed Burgoyne's face at the allusions of his new acquaintance. He understood now. The fall from the roof of the carriage had been a fall to injury and illness. Perhaps the overstraining experience of preceding days of adventure, exposure, and suffering had aided a climax of unconsciousness and delirium.

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"Don't fret," spoke the man again. "I didn't understand the gist of your wanderings. You've told no secrets. You see, I'm a woodchopper. Found you in the road. Brought you here. Nursed you since. Better?"

"I hope so. And how long have I been here?"

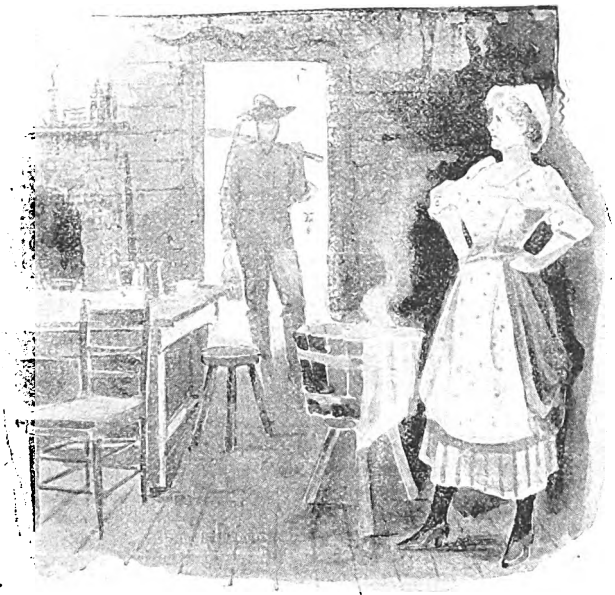
"Just eight days."

"Heavens!"

The disclosure fairly appalled Burgoyne. He uttered a dispirited moan, and sank back helpless.

"And if you care to go round again in good shape," advised his bluff nurse, "you'll lay still another eight days. Oh! don't think of intruding on me. It's rough fare, but you're welcome to it."

The week that ensued was one of torturing doubt, agony, and suspense to the convalescent wanderer. He looked less



"My daughter has been looking after you."

than ever like the Adrian Burgoyne of convict garb, as he one morning started from the hut, leaving with his kind-hearted friend half the little store of money he possessed, and his sincerest gratitude.

Somehow he seemed changed, even to himself. The hours of patient, though galling inactivity spent in convalescence had afforded him an abundance of time for reflection, and he had passed already through the chastening furnace of fear, dread, and suspense. With the calm courage of undaunted resolve had come the assurance of final victory. His one thought was of Patrice. If he could find her, if he could only place her beyond the possible power of harm or persecution from her enemies, he would be content.

And why might he not find her? She had probably been removed to the city, within the shadow of Richard Sheldon's subtle craftiness. All he could hope to gain from his prisoner was a knowledge of the cipher alphabet. Once satisfied that she did not possess it, or a memory of it, he might cast her adrift, or even return her to the obscurity of her own cottage.

At all events, he would watch the plotters, shadow them, penetrate their secrets, gain a clue to the whereabouts of their fair prisoner.

Burgoyne set his face citywards. Then he faltered.

"The lost Bible cover!" he murmured concernedly. "It is almost useless to think of searching for it after this lapse of time, but I am near the place where I cast it away. Yes, I will make a final search for it."

He reached the vicinity of the district school-house, and went all over the playground once more. He sighed sadly as he failed to discover a trace of the coveted book-cover.

"Some one has picked it up," he reflected, "and has thrown it aside again as valueless. The rain, the wind have scattered it in fragments. That ends the quest for Ralph Ringold's hidden fortune!"

He was wearied with the long walk and the arduous search. At the edge of a meadow he sat down to rest, reflect, and recuperate.

Fifty feet distant was a group of urchins engaged in flying a kite. The brisk, clear breeze had sent their paper kite aloft like a bird. It swayed in the far azure like a living winged creature.

He watched them casually, aimlessly. He started into a token of kindly interest in their boyish sports as two members of the little throng massed about the proud owner of the kite, came timidly towards him.

"I say, Mister," began one of them, and then he paused, abashed at Burgoyne's lifted gaze, and dug his bare toes into the loose dirt in an embarrassed way.

"Have you got a pocket-knife?" supplemented his bolder companion, completing the appeal.

"I think I have," responded Burgoyne accommodatingly. "What do you wish?"

"We've been sending messengers up on the kite, and we want to send some more," vouchsafed the lad.

Burgoyne understood. By "messengers" the boy meant square or circular pieces of paper or cardboard. A hole would be made through these, the string run through it, and the wind would blow the whirling fragments clear up to the kite.

"I want the knife to rip off this cloth, and cut out a piece of the pasteboard under it," continued the boy. "It's heavy, but it'll do, and——"

"What is it?"

"A book cover."

"What!"

With a vehemence that fairly shocked the urchin, Adrian Burgoyne snatched from his hand the dark, fluttering object he had exhibited.

"It cannot be!" he gasped, almost inarticulate with powerful, overwhelming emotion. "Yes, it is—the lost book-cover!"

The missing Bible cover! Yes, there it was; he recognised it in a flash. Dew and damp had defaced it, the trampling of many feet had dented and disfigured it; but even yet, inside, he could trace in faint outline the inscription he had read that fateful morning after meeting Patrice Ringold—"From her loving mother."

With trembling fingers he spread it open. His soul in his eyes, he delved into its rear compartment—a flap-pocket formed of a piece of cloth.

Would he find it? Had the mistreated receptacle of a mighty secret kept close and sure the sacred, vital trust?

He groped, he shook the cover roughly, he tore the cloth lining apart, and then——

A heartrending groan escaped his lips, and he fell back, nerveless.

He had found the Bible cover, but the inclosure, the precious, treasured key—was gone!

(To be continued.)

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BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

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Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion,
Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.

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In Boxes, 9½d., 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

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A SIGNAL SUCCESS.

"'Tis not in mortals to command success, but we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it."

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ARE SELLING FAST THE MOST WONDERFUL PACKAGE OF - - - CROCKERY IN THE WORLD. - - -

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Thousands sold all over the world. Everybody not only satisfied but amazed at the quantity and quality given.

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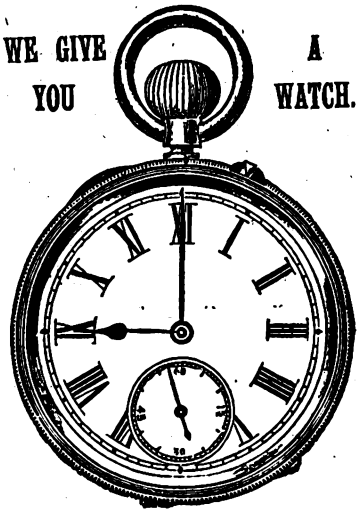

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Read what is said by those who have purchased.

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GUARANTEED TO KEEP CORRECT TIME.

Any Watch not received in going order will be exchanged.

Every Watch is Carefully Examined, Timed, and Guaranteed a Correct Timekeeper. Call and see them.

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NOTE.—The entire parcel will be sent for 6s. 6d. (post free, registered, 7s.). Each customer will receive gratis one of our HANDSOMELY ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUES. Be sure and call or send to-day for the

6s. 6d. Monster Presentation Parcel including the Handsome Keyless Watch.

S. S. GRAHAM & CO., 277, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.

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A TEN-POUND PRIZE. (SEE PAGE 823.)

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 369. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 25TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

100 YEARS' WORLD-WIDE RECORD OF SUCCESS.

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CAMOMILE

PILLS

INDIGESTION BILIOUSNESS HEADACHE
STOMACH & LIVER COMPLAINTS DEBILITY

THE BEST OF ALL TONICS and a GENTLE APERIENT. Mild in Operation, Perfectly Safe, and Free from Injurious Drugs. Sold Everywhere in Bottles at 1/1½, 2/9, and 11/- each.

Ask for "NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS," and do not be persuaded to purchase an imitation.

Prepared by NORTON'S, Limited. 21, Spital Square, London, E.

Trade Mark—One Little Bottle.

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EXTRACT OF HERBS

For the Immediate Production of

BOTANIC BEER.

A Nine-gallon Cask of Alcoholic Beer from a Brewery will cost you 10/6, but Eight Gallons of Beer made from

Mason's EXTRACT of HERBS

Can be obtained for 6d., plus a pound or two of Sugar and a little Yeast.

THE FINEST BEVERAGE IN THE WORLD.

Inventors and Manufacturers:

Newball & Mason,

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If unable to obtain it in your neighbourhood, send 9 stamps for sample bottle; or samples of both Wine Essence and Extract of Herbs, post free for 15 stamps.

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EASIEST, QUICKEST, CHEAPEST, & BEST BLACKLEAD IN THE WORLD

Risin' Sun METAL POLISH

Gives a beautiful soft brilliant polish to all kinds of Metal.

1 GREAT BOONS 3 THREE

A sample of any one post free 2 stamps.

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CONTAINS IN PROPER PROPORTIONS GLOSS, BORAX, GUM, WAX, & &c.

SEVEN PRIZE MEDALS.

C. BRANDAUER & Cos
CIRCULAR POINTED PENS

These series of pens neither scratch nor spurt. They glide over the roughest paper with the ease of a soft lead pencil. An assorted sample box for 7 stamps from the works, Birmingham.

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QUALITY GOOD AS EVER.

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TO THOROUGHLY SATISFIED PURCHASERS.

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An artist's wife, residing at Norton, near Malton, states: "I am deeply grateful to you for the good received through taking your Wind Pills. I suffered severely from

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☞ The Wind Pills being purely Vegetable, Tasteless, and Mild, and Tonic in their action, may be taken with perfect safety by the most delicate of either sex.

Of all Medicine Vendors, at **1s. 1½d.** and **2s. 9d.** Post Free for P.O. or Stamps from

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COUPON.

No. 4

Jan. 25, 1896.

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A doctor's widow knows of a simple, inexpensive remedy that permanently destroys the roots, and will forward particulars free to all those afflicted sending stamped envelope. Address Mrs. B. D. WOOD, 4, DUKE STREET, VILLIERS STREET, LONDON, W.

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If so, wear the "*A D*" Invisible Elevators (Regd.). Will increase your height up to four inches; the only approved means; detection impossible; simple, inexpensive. Send stamped envelope for particulars to the ORIENTAL TOILET CO. (B 5 Dept.), 87, Strand, London.

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We have not a dissatisfied Client.

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SULPHOLINE LOTION

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

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HAIR DESTROYED

permanently and absolutely by an entirely new and harmless self-treatment, total destruction guaranteed. Particulars free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. Prof. F. T. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

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Permanently cured. A Pamphlet giving sound practical advice and particulars of a successful treatment for a rapid, simple, and inexpensive home-cure, forwarded free to all upon receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—Prof. B. L. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

TOO STOUT

Dr. Grey's FAT REDUCING Pills.

A safe, rapid, and permanent reduction and improvement in health and **breathing** guaranteed. A special preparation kept for stubborn cases (either sex) which have resisted other treatment.

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2/9 and **4/6** per box, plain wrapper, post free to all parts. Dr. O. GREY, 57, Weymouth St., Portland Pl., London, W.

VIOLIN STRINGS.

4 Best "E's" (samples) 9d., post free.

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CURED INSTANTLY BY

BUNTER'S Prevents Decay. Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented. Neuralgic Headache and all Nerve Pains Removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d. **NERVINE**

NOSE

A RADICAL PERMANENT CURE Medically approved for Red Noses, 3s. 9d. post free, under cover. Pamphlet "Red Noses, Cause and Prevention," 1s. Machines for Ugly Noses. Particulars for stamp. LEES RAY, Specialist, Wavertree, Liverpool.

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A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs. "T. D.," 87, Strand, London.

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No. 369.] For the Week ending January 25th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

No. 2 Box, Warnborough Loop.

A COSY fire was burning in the little signal cabin known as the "No. 2 Box, Warnborough Loop." This cabin was about midway on a loop-line of about nine miles that left the main line at Stanford Junction and joined it again at Warnborough. It was used as a relief line upon which some of the regular and most of the extra day traffic was worked. The cabin in question adjoined no station, but was there for the purpose of protecting a level crossing. About three miles further on was a similar cabin, "No. 3 box," and then came Warnborough station.

Only two or three scattered houses stood near the cabin; one of them was the little cottage inhabited by the signalman, whose term of duty lasted from ten a.m. till nine p.m., there being no night trains run on the loop. Another was a house in which I resided. I was the foreman of the "Warnborough loop" gang of platelayers, and often when my work for the day was over it was my custom to repair to the signal cabin for a pipe with Joe Bradford, the signalman. This, of course, was contrary to strict regulations, but I am afraid I winked at them occasionally. Sometimes I even went so far as to work the signals myself, and often I would assist Bradford in making the train entries, he being rather a slow writer; in fact, I knew quite as much about the work as Bradford did himself.

On the evening in question Bradford was very much "down in the dumps," and I had dropped in to cheer him up a bit. He was a widower and lived with his daughter, Elsie, of whom he was passionately fond. She had taken a chill a short time previously, and was laid up with a very bad attack of pleurisy. The doctor had been in the morning and had pronounced the case to be a very serious one, especially as the weather was bitterly cold—it was the 21st of January, I remember seeing the date on Bradford's tablet calendar.

It was a little after half-past seven in the evening, the night was pitch dark, and one turned with a feeling of comfort to the cheery fire which was blazing in the cabin. Bradford stood in front of his instruments; he was expecting every moment to receive a message from Stanford to the effect that the 7.37 train to Warnborough was being dispatched along the "loop." This train was sent round by the loop every evening

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to allow of the express from London taking the main line.

"Ah, it's heart-breaking work, Charlie, having to stay here, and that poor lass in pain. I wish I could be with her. And yet I suppose it's the duty that prevents me breaking down altogether."

"You don't feel like that, I hope, Joe?"

"No, mate. I ain't afraid o' breaking down. I feel the responsibility too much. But I don't know what I should do if it weren't for your wife's kindness. I know I can trust my gal to her."

My wife was nursing his daughter, and we were both glad to be of service to the poor fellow.

"Don't you think you might knock off for a week?"

"No, mate. It's better I should be at work. Besides, God knows my lass wants all the money I can earn her now."

A tap came at the door and my wife entered. She gave a swift glance at me that told me Elsie was no better. Bradford turned his head towards her without moving from his post.

"How is she, Mrs. Wilson?"

"Much about the same. She keeps crying to see you. You couldn't spare just a moment, could you?"

"Not now," he replied in a husky tone, "maybe I'll come presently, though it's against the rules."

My wife gave me a pleading look. I knew it was wrong of me, but I said to him:

"Can't I work the 7.37 through for you?"

"No, Charlie; it wouldn't be right. I'll drop in as soon as I can, ma'am. Ah!"

The bell rang. The 7.37 was leaving Stanford, and the signalman in "No. 1 box" was advising us thereof. My wife left. Bradford returned the signal, received the answering message, turned the wheel which closed the gates of the level crossing to the road, and opened them to the line, and pulled the levers connecting with the semaphore signals. The needle of the "block telegraph" now pointed to "train on line," referring to the "block" between No. 1 and No. 2 cabin, and Bradford passed on the "be ready" signal to "No. 3 box."

Meanwhile, I had risen, and with Bradford's permission was entering the train in his "log-book." I remarked that it had started about three minutes late. Presently we could distinguish the head-lights of the engine in the distance, and the mysterious rumble which always heralds an approaching train.

Crash! Bradford had put one of the levers back as the train passed the "distant signal." In a few moments we looked out on the rushing line of lights. Crash! the second lever was reversed, the train having passed the signal beyond the gates, and once more the red light shone forth into the night. The message was sent back to No. 1, "line clear," and the needle pointed to these words on the dial. "Train on line" was wired to No. 3, who responded by fixing his and our needle to those words on the dial belonging to the "block" between us. I entered in the book the time the train passed our cabin.

Bradford opened the gates again, then he stood before his instruments waiting for the signal from No. 3, when his duty in regard to this particular train was over. Very soon the bell rung, was duly answered, and the needle on the "tell-tale" dial swung back to its normal position of "line closed." I made the third entry in the book, stating the time at which the train had cleared "No. 3 box."

Then Bradford turned to me with a sigh of relief, and said:

"Now there isn't another train due before the 8.40 from Warnborough, for it's a very rare thing to get any extras running over the loop after seven. I'll just run over the road and see my poor lassie for five minutes. You'll stay here, won't you, mate?"

"All right, I'll stop. But look here, Joe, supposing anything happens. What am I to do?"

"Oh, I shall be back before that. There's no danger, but if the bell should ring, rush over to me at once."

I promised to do so, and he went out. I sat down by the fire and puffed away at my pipe lazily. Five or six minutes passed, certainly not more, and I happened to glance aside at the instruments, when, somewhat to my surprise, Bradford was standing in front of them once more. I thought for the moment it was rather strange that I should not have heard him enter the cabin, and then said:

"Well, how is she, Joe?"

He made no answer, and I was about to repeat the question when the bell in front of him suddenly rang. I recognised it as a warning from No. 1 box. Bradford replied at once, and then *four* consecutive rings announced the fact that a special train was leaving Stanford for Warnborough by the loop. I rose.

"Lucky you came back, Joe, isn't it? Shall I enter it for you?"

He merely nodded in reply. I entered the train. It was exactly four minutes past eight. Meanwhile Bradford had done everything that I have described in the signalling of the previous train. The "tell tale" on the first block was at "train on line," and on the other at "line clear."

Presently I could see the approaching headlights of the special. They consisted of a green and a white light placed the one over the other in the centre, indicating that the train was bound for Highfield—a large town some twenty miles beyond Warnborough. As she passed the cabin I counted eight coaches with the brake-vans, which latter were "composite," with compartments for passengers in addition to that of the guard. The red "tail light" speedily vanished into the distance. Bradford had reversed the levers and opened the gates. I had "entered" the train, the first "block" pointed to "line closed" and the second to "train on line." Bradford stood in front of the instruments with his finger on the button ready to return the signal of No. 3 box. That box, as I have said, was about three miles further down the line. Trains generally did the distance in about six and a half minutes, and they took this length of time because of a very sharp curve about a mile beyond us, where they had to reduce speed considerably.

The usual six and a half minutes were over and yet no ring came—eight—nine—ten minutes and still the little indicator pointed to "train on line." Bradford's face grew paler and paler, but he never said a word in answer to my questions. In silence we waited. I glanced at the clock. It was almost half-past eight. *Something must have gone wrong!* It was a clear, calm night; I went to the window, slid it aside, and leant out into the darkness, listening intently for a few moments, but I could hear nothing. When I turned round *Bradford had gone!* For a whole minute I felt quite paralysed with alarm. Then I rushed to the indicator. It stood at *line closed*, and yet I knew that it was impossible for it to have moved *without the bell ringing twice*. I was making for the door when, to my relief, Bradford re-entered the cabin.

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"Why! Whatever have you opened the window for!" he ejaculated. "Isn't it cold enough?"

"Where have you been? Is she safe?"

"Safe? Poor lamb, I wish I could say she *was*."

"I don't mean Elsie. I mean the 'special.'"

"'Special?' *What* special?"

"Why the one that passed through over a quarter of an hour ago. What was the matter? Why didn't the bell ring if she's cleared No. 3? Why did you go out?"

"What on earth do you mean? You're dreaming, man! There's been no train since the 7.37. I should have heard it—you'd have sent for me."

"Do you mean to say you haven't been in here for the last five-and-twenty minutes?"

"Been in here? No, of course I haven't. I've been sitting with Elsie. Your wife will tell you so."

I went to the log book. There was the evidence.

"But look here, Joe. Here are the entries." He looked and looked again. He couldn't make it out. I told him the whole thing. He declared he had only just returned from his house.

"You've been dreaming, Charlie. You've done it all in your sleep."

"I suppose I must have," I replied; "but it seemed so real, every bit of it, except that I never heard you come in or go out."

"Well, let's make sure." And he wired to both boxes. They replied: "All correct." I could only conclude that I had undergone a kind of nightmare. Joe drew a line through the entries, marked "error" on the side of them, and initialed it. Very soon the up train from Warnborough was signalled and passed us, and then I left the cabin, pondering deeply.

The weather changed the next day, and with it Elsie began to mend. Bradford and I had several discussions over what we both concluded had been a most remarkable dream, until we decided to let the matter drop altogether.

It would probably never have been revived if it had not been for the strange sequel which I am about to relate. I will merely give the details as they occurred, and must leave the reader to judge how much of the supernatural played a part in them. Whatever view of the case be taken, however, it must be confessed that there was at least an extraordinary coincidence.

A year had elapsed, and I was once again smoking my pipe in "No. 2 box." Bradford was in good spirits. His daughter was about to be married to my nephew, a strapping young guard on the line, and he was very pleased with the match. She stood before us now, the picture of health and beauty, having brought us in two steaming cups of coffee.

"Where's Ernest to-day, Elsie?" said I, "I haven't seen him all the week."

"I fancy he's been up to London, Mr. Wilson, on the Highfield excursion. I had a note from him yesterday, and he was expecting that job."

"Ah, that was worked on the main line this morning," said Bradford. "Have a bit of supper ready for both of us soon after nine, will ye, lass?" he added, as she was about to retire.

"All right, father," she replied, and went out, closing the door.

"The 8.37's late to-night," remarked Bradford glancing at his clock. "She's generally well up to time, too."

I looked at the clock, and in doing so my eye rested on the calendar below, "January the 21st." I remembered the date in an instant, but said nothing, merely smiling to myself at the recollection of my strange hallucination.

"Ting."

"The 'attention' signal," Bradford replied.

"Ting, ting, ting (pause), ting." Ordinary passenger train. Everything was done as usual, and we stood waiting for the train to pass.

One of the signalman's duties is to see that the "tail lamps" on all trains that pass his box are properly fixed. These tail lamps are attached to the rear of the last vehicle of each train, and play a very important part in the working of the line. They act as danger signals should a train by any irregularity overtake another, for then the driver of the second train can see at once what is in front of him. They also enable the signalman to see that the *whole* of the train has passed him. Accordingly Bradford looked out of his cabin as usual while the train passed. There was the "loop-line" single red light on the brake-van. Everything was correct.

In a short space of time we received the signal from No. 3 box that the train had passed safely, and Bradford drew a chair up to the fire with the intention of having a comfortable chat and smoke. We had scarcely begun a conversation when the bell sounded. It was a communication from No. 1 box.

"Hullo," said Bradford, as he pressed the button in reply, "something extra, I suppose."

"Ting, ting, ting, ting," Four rings without a pause. *A special express train was starting from Stanford.* I made the entry while Bradford worked the instruments in silence. Presently, as I heard the rumble of the train, I looked along the line and could distinguish the head lamps—*a white light over a green.*

"The Highfield excursion," said my companion. "I suppose they haven't room for it on the main line."

Crash! Our lever had been put back. The train had passed the distant signal.

"Why, what's the matter, Charlie?" he exclaimed, for I had seized him by the arm.

"My dream!" I exclaimed. "It's exactly the same——"

"Nonsense—let go, man—I can't see her pass."

I can never tell exactly how it happened; I am not naturally superstitious, but the coincidence of the date and the whole scene seemed to stagger me at first, and then give me a wild desire to stop the train. I looked out as she rushed past, and counted *eight coaches, and the brake-vans were composite.* I glanced at the dial. The indicator was at "line clear" for the next block. Everything was right, and yet a mighty impulse came to me that I could not resist. It was all the work of a few seconds. I took Bradford by the shoulders, hurled him out of the way, and *reversed the second lever* which worked the signal about 250 yards down the line. The train could not have been more than seventy or eighty yards off when the green light changed into an ominous red glare. There was a whistle and I could see the sparks fly from the wheels as the vacuum breaks were applied to bring her to a standstill.

"Good God, Charlie! are you mad? Don't you see what you've done? You've stopped the train! What am I to do?"

"I couldn't help—" I began, when—"Ting, ting, ting, ting, ting, ting," *six consecutive rings* from No. 3 box. We both stared dumbly at each other, for we knew well what it meant.

Those six rings were the "*Obstruction Danger Signal.*"

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Something was on the line between us and the next box.

Bradford instantly repeated the signal according to regulation. Then he gave eight rings to "No. 3," thus informing him that he had closed the entry to the block in time.

"Charlie, you'd best get out," he said. "There's no knowing what's up."

"All right," I replied, and left the box. I was joined outside by Elsie, who had heard the whistle.

"What's the matter, Mr. Wilson?"

"I don't know. There's a block on the line somewhere, I think."

"How did it happen?"

"That's more than I can tell you."

It *was* more than I could tell her. I was puzzling my brain to think what had taken place. *How was the line blocked?* A train had been along only just before and must have passed No. 3 correctly, because he had signalled it. He dared not have done this if he had not seen the tail lamp on the brake-van, and as he had obviously seen this, it was clear that no vehicle could have broken away from the previous train.

While I was pondering over the matter, Joe put his head out of the window and waved a lantern as a signal for the train to back towards the box. Slowly she did so. The rear guard was at his window as she stopped by the box.

"What's up, Mr. Bradford," said a well-known voice.

"Oh, it's Ernest," whispered Elsie.

"Hush," I said, "let's listen."

"Well, I can't quite make it out yet," replied Bradford: "but No. 3 says that something's broken loose from the last train between here and Warnborough—probably this side of No. 3—but no one seems to be sure where."

It was a mystery!

"That's a rum go," said the guard. "Didn't No. 3 see her tail-lamp?"

"Yes, he says he did. Hullo! here's a message coming."

A few moments passed, and Bradford appeared again at the window.

"You've got to wait here for the 8.40 from Warnborough. She'll have a special engine on and will take you back to Stanford in her rear. Then you'll proceed to Highfield by the main (there were crossing points opposite the box so that the train could be moved to the up line). They'll spot the block coming along and report here."

Great was the grumbling among the passengers at the delay, though I don't think Ernest minded much, for he managed to have a quiet five minutes with Elsie while we were waiting. She, poor girl, was crying at the thought of his being so near a probable accident.

Presently the up-train was signalled, and came to a halt opposite the box. Then we learnt what had really happened, and a most extraordinary thing it was. It appeared that at Stanford Junction a "foreign" carriage truck had been attached to the rear of the train. Now the man who was responsible for attaching this truck had forgotten to take the tail lamp from the break-van and fix it to the rear of the truck. Both the signalman at No. 1 box and ourselves, therefore, had seen the red light on the brake-van, because on account of the lowness of the truck there was nothing behind to obscure it, and we had imagined that it was on the last vehicle—not seeing the truck at all.

This truck had broken loose on the curve I have mentioned, between us and No. 3, but, of course, the tail-lamp being on the break-van, appeared correct to the signalman there, and not until the train drew up at Warnborough was the discovery made. Now comes the second extraordinary coincidence. All our trains were fitted with the vacuum brake, and that meant that in the event of a vehicle becoming detached the pipes would break, and the vacuum act at once, *stopping the train.* How was it, then, the train in question was not stopped? Because this particular truck belonged to a company who had adopted the *Westinghouse brake*, and so could not be connected to the *vacuum.* Sometimes a *single* "foreign" truck (as in this case) is attached to the rear of a train without brake communication, but never more than *one.* It was this curious combination of circumstances that had caused the train to proceed to Warnborough apparently "all correct."

Little remains to be said, except that Bradford was complimented for his smartness in stopping the train. No. 3 had been in agonies for a few moments for fear his signal had been given too late, for if the train had once passed the outer signal post before the green light had changed to red, no one could have saved her from coming into collision with the truck right on the dangerous curve.

But no one ever knew that the red light had flashed out *ten good seconds before the signal was received.* We never mentioned that to a soul. I don't know whether you will call it a dream, or a warning, or only a mental hallucination, but of this I am certain—that if I had not reversed the lever on the spur of that momentary impulse, the excursion train would assuredly have been wrecked. The needle would have pointed to "train on line" long after the time that she ought to have passed No. 3 box.

VICTOR LORENZO WHITECHURCH.

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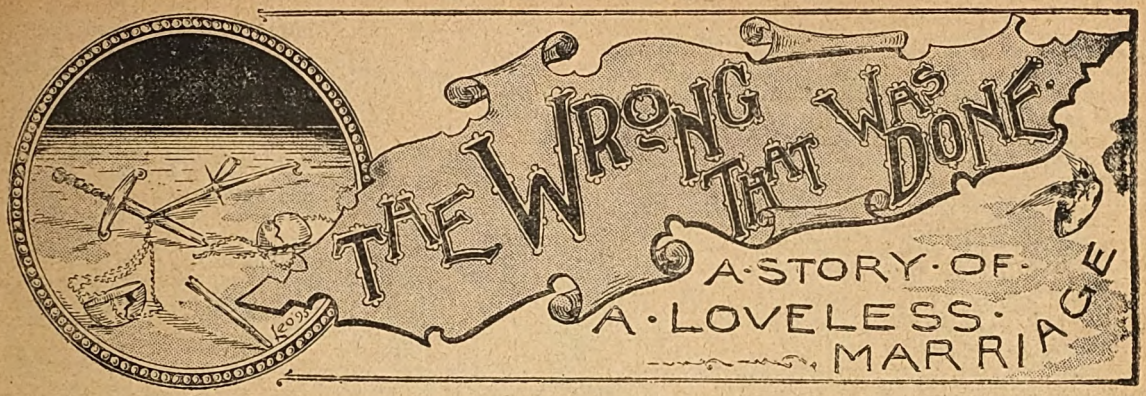

By E. C. WAGGENER.

CHAPTER X.

It was the last day of October. The first bright autumn days had given place to misty mornings and cold grey twilights, and the woods that only a little while ago were flaming in gold and russet and scarlet, had faded to sombre brown. Helen had grown strong enough to walk about the rooms, and sometimes, when the days were fair, even ventured as far as the garden, where she would sit for hours, her tired eyes fixed gloomily on the distant blue hills.

She was still very weak, however, and had grown so irritable and peevish that it required great patience on the part of Kitty to coax her out of her strange moods. On this particular day she had been unusually impatient and fretful. She had insisted upon having her lounge drawn up close to the window, where she could look out at the fading woods and fields, but had suddenly complained that there was nothing worth seeing, after all, that the light hurt her eyes, and she knew, she was very sure, that Kitty hadn't the least consideration for her in placing her in such an uncomfortable position.

Presently she fell into a doze.

"I will lower the blind a little," said Kitty, paying no attention to the peevish tone. "Now, that's better. The room is just dark enough to be pleasant, and you can enjoy the view without hurting your eyes. Shall I read to you?" she asked, a little frightened at the queer look in the beautiful eyes raised to hers.

"No. Why should you read to me? I am getting tired of being kept in the house all the time. Why can't I go out for a walk? It has been so long since I was in the woods. And the brook looks so cool and pleasant from here. I think I would like to bathe my feet in it, just as I used to do when I was a little girl. I'm certain I could walk that far if I tried really hard."

"To-morrow you may go," said Kitty soothingly. "You are hardly strong enough."

"I am perfectly well," interrupted Helen angrily. "You keep me shut up here day after day, as if I were a prisoner and you my gaoler. I am not allowed to visit any of the neighbours or to see any one but you and Betty and the doctor. I think it's very hard that I'm not permitted to do as I please in my own house."

"I didn't know you cared for company, or that you wanted to visit any of your neighbours," said Kitty gently. "You asked me not to allow them to come, and I have kept them away to please you."

"And I'm sure I *don't* want to see any of them," cried Helen, her mood suddenly changing. "Oh, Kitty, I'm so miserable!" she added passionately. "I wonder why it is that I live on when I want so much to die."

"Oh, Helen! live for *me*," said Kitty, taking the wasted hand in her own and holding it fast. "I will do my best to make you happy, dear. We will go away from here—anywhere you wish to go—and together we'll begin a new life. You are too young to wish for death—and I want you and need you so much."

"You know that you don't mean a word you're saying," exclaimed Helen, with a wild, strange laugh, wrenching her hand away and rising weakly to her feet. "In your heart, this very moment, you are wishing I would die, so you could marry Gifford. Why can't you be satisfied with knowing that, if I *am* his wife, he hates me and loves only you?"

Kitty looked at her with an expression of such pain and astonishment that her eyes suddenly lost their wild light, and her lips began to tremble.

"Don't mind me, Kitty," she said humbly, hiding her poor wasted face on her sister's shoulder. "If you knew what pain is here," and she passed her hand wearily across her hot forehead, "and how I long for Gifford at times you wouldn't think hard of me for the foolish words I say."

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"I know you are ill and troubled, and that you don't mean half you say," returned Kitty gently.

Helen sighed and looked wistfully out at the window.

"I have always loved this month," she said presently, breaking a little silence. "It is so bright and beautiful. And I have thought so often that, of all the months in the year, I would rather die in October. Kitty"—changing the subject abruptly—"do you remember the time we went to the woods and found those strange-looking leaves? It was in October, I think, for the woods were very pretty then."

"Yes, I remember it perfectly," said Kitty. "I know you said the leaves looked as if they had been dipped in blood, they were so red."

"I have them in my box yet. But they are faded and dead now. It has been so long, so very long ago, since I gathered them. What day of the month is it, Kitty? I think I have forgotten to count the days and weeks."

"The last day of October. Why did you ask, Helen?"

"Because I don't want to die in November. It is such a dismal month, and this one has been so bright and beautiful."

Kitty made no reply. With every evidence of a coming change before her, she could not bring herself to believe that Helen would die. Yet did she not lie awake night after night, her heart heavy with gloomy forebodings? Had she not watched for nearly four months the slow wasting of that pallid face with the despairing thought that it would soon be hidden from her sight for ever?

"Do you remember the time when we went fishing in the brook, and Ben Freeman caught the eel?" asked Helen, her mind reverting to the past again. "I have laughed many a time since then, when I thought of how scared you were when Ben tried to put it in your hand. Then, when Aleck Smith cut his foot with the scythe, the next day, how you screamed when you saw the blood, and how Aleck scolded and cried because I didn't tie it up fast enough. What happy days they were, Kitty! Even father's ugly ways didn't keep us from having a good time occasionally."

For nearly an hour she talked thus, sometimes rationally, again in a strange, incoherent way that frightened Kitty; yet her talk was always of the past. Not once did she refer to her trouble. She seemed suddenly to have forgotten it. Presently she fell into a doze, but soon awoke with a start.

"I think I shall go to bed," she said. "I feel unusually tired and sleepy. Perhaps I've talked too much to-day, but somehow I couldn't help it. Don't sit up long to-night, Kitty, for I won't need anything, and it really is not necessary for you to be so watchful of me. And tell Betty she may go to bed, too. I can't endure to have her sitting by me all night. She stares at me so. And sometimes she falls asleep in her chair, and snores so dreadfully that I can't rest a bit. I hope we'll soon be able to do without her."

"I am so tired of this old lounge," she added, when Kitty had helped her to undress. "Would you mind letting me sleep with you to-night, Kitty?"

"You know I will be glad to have you," answered Kitty, as she carried her over to the bed and tucked her snugly in. Then she stooped down and kissed her with unusual tenderness.

"Good-night. I shall not stay up much longer," she said.

The morning sun flooded the room with a golden light, one long bright ray falling directly across Kitty's eyes and waking her suddenly from a heavy sleep. She glanced quickly at the lounge, forgetting for a moment that Helen had asked to share her bed, and, seeing it empty, sprang up and crossed the room hastily.

A search was made through the house.

Then remembering, all at once, that she had fallen asleep with Helen's arms around her, she went back to the bed. But if she had been a little frightened and bewildered at seeing the lounge empty, she was alarmed beyond measure when she found that her sister was not in the bed. Her clothes lay on a chair just as they had been placed there the previous night, but Helen herself was not in the room.

Kitty felt a strange pain in her heart as she hastened into the adjoining room to arouse Betty.

"Betty, get up and help me to find Helen," she cried, shaking the girl roughly. "Her clothes are on the chair just as I placed them last night, and her slippers are on the little stool in the corner; but she is nowhere in the room! Oh, Betty, what does it mean? When and where could she have gone?"

"Isn't Miss Helen in bed and aslape?" asked Betty, yawning and rubbing her eyes stupidly. "Shure, I left ye both slapin' side by side as innercent-like as two babies."

"She is not in bed—she is not in the room," said Kitty excitedly. "Get up at once, girl, and help me to find her. Did she pass through this room? or have you been sleeping too soundly to see or hear anything?"

"Shure an' she's not fur off," said Betty reassuringly, as she drew on her clothes. "Do you look into the other rooms while I take a peep in the garden. She can't have gone fur, an' her so weak."

But a search through the house and a careful survey of every nook and corner about the place failed to show any trace of the missing one. By this time Kitty was almost wild with fear and excitement; and remembering Helen's strange mood of the previous day she hurried Betty off to the doctor, summoning him to her aid at once.

"It is very probable that she has wandered off to some of the neighbouring houses," he remarked, when Kitty had told him of Helen's singular disappearance. "Come, you must not give up," he added cheerfully, as he looked at her white, despairing face. "No doubt we will find her presently. I will get some of the neighbours to help me, and we'll begin the search without delay."

"I shall go, too," said Kitty eagerly. "I couldn't endure to stay here and wait. Anything will be better than this terrible suspense."

So a thorough search began; but it proved in vain until late in the day. Then some one suddenly remembered to have seen a white object moving slowly about the churchyard the previous night.

"It was nigh about midnight, an' I was comin' from the station when I seen it," he explained. "I run every step of

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the way home thinkin' mebbe it was a ghost. Hit might a-been *her*."

So up to the churchyard they went, and there, at the foot of a little child's grave, they came upon the object of their search, lying face downwards on the cold, wet grass, her white nightdress soaked with dew and stained with weeds, her feet torn and bleeding from the sharp stones and cruel briars that had bruised and lacerated them.

The night had brought Helen her wish. She was dead.

CHAPTER XI.

QUIET little Looe was full of unusual bustle and confusion one morning in the following April. Waggons and carts rattled noisily over the narrow streets, children laughed and played and sung in the bright sunshine, and even the surliest farmer, at work in his field, found it impossible to keep back a little burst of song or a merry whistle as his eyes took in the brightness and beauty of everything around him. It would have been a sad heart indeed that could not have found some pleasure on such a day, with its wild splendour of purple skies and budding leaves, its warm, sweet winds, and jubilant songs of bluebird and thrush and lark.

Had they not heard unearthly sounds?

For six months—ever since Helen's death—the little cottage had remained closed. Standing in the deep shadow of its waving trees, it wore a strange, desolate look with the glad tumult of life everywhere around it. The superstitious ones declared that it was haunted. Had they not seen, on dark, stormy nights a light burning in the window and the face of the dead girl pressed against the pane? Had they not heard unearthly sounds in the vacant rooms night after night? And had not the bravest man in the village been frightened away by the terrible groans and shrieks that had issued from the house when he had gone there to investigate? So it came about that the place was shunned even by those who were sensible enough to turn a deaf ear to the stories concerning it.

Vague reports had been circulated at first about the sudden and unexpected separation of Helen and her husband, but they were only uncertain rumours that could not be substantiated, the facts of the case never having become known. No one in Looe had seen or heard of Gifford Vane since his disappearance. He was as completely lost as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up; so the gossip and speculation concerning his probable fate had gradually given place to other thoughts.

Yet the gossip was suddenly revived this bright April morning by the sudden appearance of Kitty North in the village. At the station she merely nodded to the familiar crowd that was gathered on the platform, then hurried off in the direction of the deserted cottage.

"I wonder what she's up to now?" remarked a woman to her neighbour. "'Pears as if every time Kitty North comes to Looe some sort of trouble comes with her, or follers close after her. Maybe she's come after Helen's things. It's just a shame that them things is a-layin' in there, spilin' an' gittin' covered with dust an' mould, an' nobody to use 'em."

"Well, I'm shore *I* don't want 'em," said the other, as she set down her basket to watch Kitty. "I wouldn't use 'em fur nothin' in the world if I could he'p it."

"As fur that, neither would I," rejoined the first speaker, a slatternly-looking woman, who held a sickly child in her arms, which she was trying in vain to quiet. "I'd be afeard that anything from that house would bring me bad luck. There! I knowed she was goin' straight to the house. Now les' watch an' see what she's goin' to do."

Taking a key from her pocket, Kitty unlocked the door and went in, emerging, a few minutes later, with a small basket in her hand. Fastening the door securely, she hurried off down the garden path.

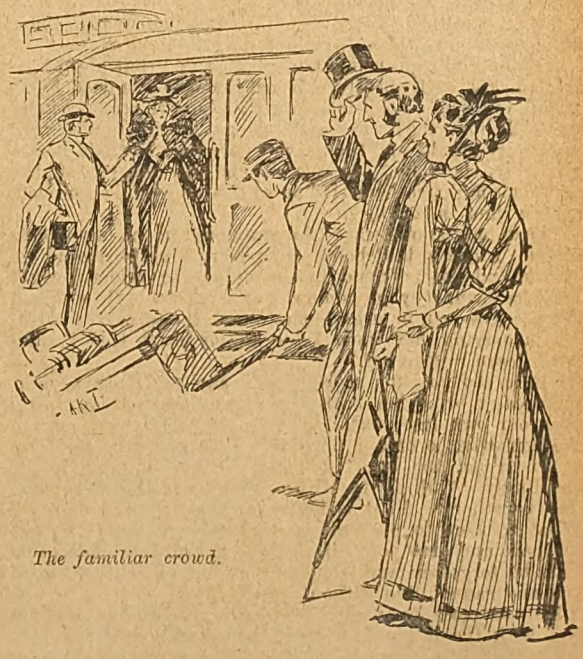
"See, she's gone to diggin' up flowers," said the woman with the child. "I wonder what she's goin' to do with 'em?"

"Plant 'em on Helen's grave, most likely," remarked the other. "I told you so!" she added presently, as Kitty came through the gate, the basket filled to the brim with flowers, and went slowly up the hill in the direction of the graveyard.

On reaching the graveyard, Kitty paused by a mound that was directly under a large yew-tree, and clearing it of the young, tender grass that covered it, she proceeded to plant her flowers—a white rose that of all her garden treasures had been Helen's favourite, a young lily that was sending out fresh green leaves, and a tuft of white violets already in bloom.

"Oh, Helen, Helen!" she whispered, as she bent over her loving task, "have all the bitter tears I have shed since you went away atoned for the past? Through the mysterious shadows that keep you from me, do you see and understand how dark and desolate life has grown to me?"

Presently, when her work was done, she sat down under the yew-tree, and, leaning her face in her hands, fell into a long and mournful reverie. It was not the Kitty North of



The familiar crowd.

old who sat there in that weary, listless attitude—not the proud yet warm-hearted and impulsive girl who had been so ready to give up the one love of her life that Helen might be happy—but a humble, sorrowful woman, out of the ashes of whose past no hope had yet arisen. Her face had grown thin and sharp, her eyes heavy and dim as though they

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were constantly shadowed with tears, and a grey hair gleamed here and there in the braids of her soft brown tresses.

"How fast I have grown old!" she said, pushing her hair from her forehead with a gesture of weariness and pain. "Is *he* as changed, I wonder?" And as if in answer to the question in her heart, she looked up to see before her, his eyes looking straight into hers—Gifford Vane!

"Now les' watch and see."

"*You* here?" she gasped rather than spoke.

"Yes," he answered quietly, but in a hard, bitter voice. "Don't look so frightened," he added, coming a step nearer. "I am no ghost."

Yet truly he was but the ghost of his former self, Kitty thought, as she looked at his changed, haggard face.

"Why do you come now, when it is too late?" she asked in a voice that shook with suppressed emotion. "Why —"

"I was sent away," he said, in a tone that awed her into silence. "I only heard a few weeks ago that she was dead. Answer me this: Did she hate me to the last?"

"No, she forgave you; she said so many times before she died."

"I wanted to come back, but I was afraid. She had told me that she hated me, and never wanted to see me again. What could I do but go away after that?"

Kitty was silent.

"Kitty"—speaking the old familiar name in a softened voice—"do you think she would have lived with me again if I had come back?"

For a moment Kitty hesitated.

"I'm afraid not," she said, in a low, unsteady voice. "She could never have trusted you again."

"I did not expect it after what passed that night," he said quickly. "Even after I heard that she was dead I was afraid to come. Yet I felt a strong desire to see once more the little home she loved so well, the garden she tended with such busy hands, and the grave where they had laid her to rest. By some lucky chance no one saw me get off the train last night, so I hurried on to the house and succeeded, after a time, in getting in.

"God only knows what I have suffered in the last twelve hours. Alone in that house, with everything to remind me of her, and not a friend in the village to whom I could look for sympathy or comfort! Kitty, we both wronged her deeply—you in urging me to take the false step I did; I in marrying her when I felt in my heart that I could never learn to love her."

"It is too late for regret now," she said with a sigh. "We can't bring her back any more than we can bring back our own lost youth. We can do nothing but endure the consequence of our miserable folly and mistake."

"It is *not* too late," he said, holding out his hands pleadingly. "Oh, Kitty, why can't we live the rest of our lives together? What is there to come between us now? What is there to prevent us from being happy? Forget the past and give yourself to me. Let all those miserable days be forgotten and come to me; for, oh, Kitty, I need you and cannot live without you!"

He was close beside her, looking down into her troubled face with the light of a great love and longing in his eyes; but she turned away with a little shudder of pain.

"My love died long ago," she said in a low voice, not daring to raise her eyes because of the utter misery she knew she would read in his.

"I do not believe it," he said fiercely. "Such love as ours will only grow stronger with the years."

"Listen to me," she said, her voice firm and sweet, yet strangely sad. "If Helen had not come between us, there was something else that would have kept us apart. You asked me once to explain to you why I remained hidden from my friends after I left auntie, and I refused to tell you anything—"

"But I was quite willing to take you to my heart again without an explanation," he interrupted eagerly. "I told you so several times, and I tell you the same thing now."

"But I want you to know. It is a secret that was known to no one but my stepfather. Perhaps he only guessed it. I do not know, and it matters very little now."

"Well?"

"Instead of teaching a school, as my friends thought, those four years were spent in an asylum. I knew you would start and turn from me; I knew you would shudder at the thought of ever caring for a woman on whom the curse of hereditary insanity rested."

"If it rested on you, did it not rest on Helen, too?" he asked gravely. "And yet you advised me to marry her!"

"Because I hoped and believed she would escape."

"And I am willing and ready to run the same risk with you. You are afflicted with no malady now; your mind is as clear and free from insanity as my own. And even if it were not it would not make the slightest difference to me. Who except the utterly wretched ever go mad? And I would guard you so tenderly."

"Hush!" she said, with a gesture of pain. "Helen, lying here in her grave, parts us more utterly than Helen living and your wife could have done. Forgive me," she added with sudden gentleness, "but you know as well as I that no happiness could ever come of such a marriage."

She looked up quickly as she spoke, and her eyes grew dim at the sight of his suffering face.

"Kitty," he said, his voice full of persuasive tenderness, "I tell you it is *not* too late for us to be happy. I gave you up two years ago, when my heart pleaded to keep you always—to suffer nothing to come between us; but I cannot give you up now, even after what you have told me. And I am not asking you to share a life of poverty with me. My uncle, from whom I had been estranged for several years, died two months ago, leaving me a rich man, as one counts the wealth of this world; but my money will bring me no comfort, no pleasure, no enjoyment, unless you share it with me."

"I cannot," she answered, her face pale and troubled. "I could never forget that you ruined Helen's life, and sent her to her grave in the bloom and freshness of her youth. Yet I wish to part with you in peace and friendship. Here, by her grave, let there be no bitterness between us, for, remember, she loved us both."

"There can be no such thing as friendship between those who have loved as we have loved," he said quickly. "I told you this once before. If we part it will be to meet as strangers hereafter, for I will never willingly cross your path again."

"Yet we will part in peace?" she pleaded, coming a step nearer, and holding out her hand.

"In peace? Yes," he answered, taking her hand and holding it as if he never meant to let it go.

"It is for the last time," she said, lifting her eyes, dark and troubled and full of misery, to his.

"It is for the last time," he repeated mechanically.

And thus beside Helen's grave, in the fair spring weather, they parted, these two who were destined never to meet in life again.

He turned as if to go, but coming back suddenly, gathered her in his arms, and, holding her close to his heart, kissed her pale lips as he would have kissed them had she been lying cold and lifeless before him.

"Good-bye, my love, my life!" he said.

And the next moment she was *alone*.

THE END.

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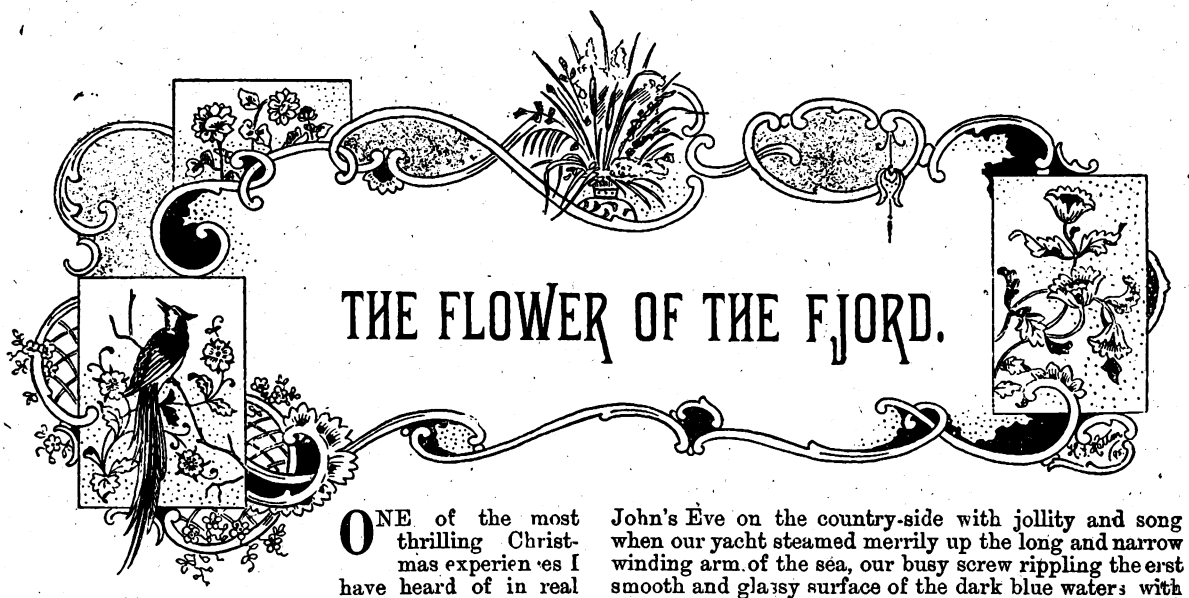

THE FLOWER OF THE FJORD.

ONE of the most thrilling Christmas experiences I have heard of in real life—so thrilling that I am glad it was not my own—happened to a friend of mine, Harold Harrison by name, shortly after he settled in Norway, some years ago. He shall tell you the story in his own way.

* * * * * * *

I shall never forget the Christmas Eve of 1888, nor the snow-clad cliffs that tower above the dark blue waters of Trondhjem Fjord. Two things happened then and there which will never be erased from my memory. One has given me some strands of grey in my black hair, some extra furrows on my forehead, and a weak right arm; the other has given me the keeping and cherishing of the fairest flower of womanhood that ever blossomed in the North.

In company with a well-chosen party of acquaintances, steady-going young fellows, not too studious nor too gay, I had journeyed to the Land of the Midnight Sun in the summer of that year, by one of the excellently appointed steam-yachts which voyage to and from the grim North Cape. It was my first visit to the famous country of vikings and sagas, and I need not tell how pleased and interested was I, who had lived for the most part in the smoke of London, with every fresh glimpse of the picturesque and wave-worn shore of the old Norseland.

After a most troublesome tossing on the choppy North Sea, our first halt was at Bergen, the town of fish and fishermen, where even the price of an article is told as so many herrings, or other of the finny tribe. Muscular-bodied men are the fearless fishers, powerful of jaw, shaggy of beard; with high cheek-bones, thickly-tangled hair, rolled-up sleeves, large boots, red shirts and coarse trousers, and invariably with knife and marlin-spike in hand. We spoke to several, finding them, despite their bluff appearance, surprisingly well-informed, and honest to the core. This will equally apply to those we met at Trondhjem, and all along the coast.

It was at Trondhjem, a town of 25,000 inhabitants, on the Fjord of that name, situated in 63° N. lat.—I like to be particular—that I first saw Thelma, the lovely daughter of the wealthy landowner, Brun Nillson.

They were keeping the mid-summer festival of St. John's Eve on the country-side with jollity and song when our yacht steamed merrily up the long and narrow winding arm of the sea, our busy screw rippling the erst smooth and glassy surface of the dark blue waters with unceasing whirl. On either side bold shores rose sheer from the water, snow-flecked peaks towering up to a sky softened by drifts of dull grey cloud streaked here and there with rosy tints of the low-down sun, while as the ship sped on, now appearing landlocked by the rugged hills, and anon steaming up a wider space, the tinkle and splash of tiny cataracts falling down the mountain sides struck pleasantly on the ear. Now and then came the sound of the shepherds' "jodelling" across the sparsely cultivated valleys inland, mingled with the bleating of sheep and the short, sharp barking of watch-ful dogs.

When, to crown this perfect picture of sea, sky, and shore seen at its best in the soft, slow dying of a summer's day, with the sun sinking to its lowest in a gentle glow of light beyond the western, mist-topped hills, I caught sight of Thelma on the landing-stage, waiting to send some message by boat, I thought that nothing more was needed to make it the fairest scene that human gaze had ever rested on. Thompson would tell you, no doubt, that I had no eyes for anything but the tall, fair girl in her holiday scarlet and brown, and he would be right, but was there not excuse for such concentration?

Who, looking into those large blue eyes, full of truth and trust; looking at that sweet young face—grave in repose, yet lightly moved to winsome smile and catching mirth—framed in its glory of pale gold hair; noting the healthy, witching outlines of the lovely form, and taking in at a glance the neatness and inexpressible charm of the homely attire, could fail to be enchanted with the vision, or, being a man, to fall in love therewith? "Of all men, not Harold Harrison!" said I.

Our stay at Trondhjem was not long, and I found no way that time of speaking to the rich Thane's daughter, but whether it was from chance or design, I found that when I strolled alone to the little quay, at what in lower latitudes was sunset, smoking my evening briar, Thelma, too, would be there, as though waiting for some one. Mostly, a girl friend was with her, or a sturdy brother, and always a big, rough hound named Wolf. How I fretted and fumed that I knew so little of Norwegian and so much of Greek; that I could read so much that

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had been written two thousand years ago, and I could not talk to this maid in the year of grace 1888. I resolved to remedy this defect in my education as soon as possible, and nearly worried the life out of Thompson, our champion linguist, in the furtherance of my resolve. Poor old chap! He put in a great amount of hard work as interpreter on that voyage, and would have gone home richer than he went away had he been paid at professional rates.

The others had no care for my mute romance, and so our yacht's prow was pointed for the mouth of the creek after a week's exploration of the vicinity. Amongst the crowd that gathered to see us off I noticed Thelma, and even thought I saw her cast a glance of longing and regret upon me as the trimly-built craft sheered off.

Up the rugged coast, with its quiet, dark inlets and black rocks, passing the one thousand feet high Raft Sund, and ever steering north, we came in turn to Hemmingsvaer and Svolvaer, and, higher still, to Tromsö, Hammerfest, and the Lofoten Isles, and thence, through the chilly waters of the Arctic Sea, to the gaunt old sentinel who guards the approaches to the frost-bound region of the Pole, the famed North Cape.

Black and vast it loomed against the clear, cold sky, frowning upon the round red ball of the midnight sun that flushed with crimson the scanty shreds of cloud hovering in the zenith, and cast a glittering path of dancing light upon the silent, solitary ocean, stretching, unbroken, to north and west, far as the eye could see. Grand, solemn, and sublime it rose from the sea that laved its base—in peace when we saw it—a striking type in its still impressiveness of the mighty forces which outlast the swiftly-ebbing tide of human weal and woe. Grander still must it appear when the storm rages round it, the wind howls fiercely from the portals of the unknown north, and the wild waves dash in vain, mad fury on its rocky sides, their high-flung spray wetting the patches of lichen which cluster on it, and mingling with the falling drops thrown off the white cascades which furrow its weather-beaten breast. I admired it like the others; but I thought of Thelma, wondering if she were waiting on the quay at that hour, and was glad when the ship's head turned, and her keel ploughed on to warmer southern shores.

We put in at Trondhjem again for another week, and by then, having gained a smattering of her tongue and spoken once with her, I was loth to leave my Thelma; so loth, indeed, that the yacht went back without me, bearing word to all in England, whom it might concern, that I had resolved to winter in Norway. The fellows chaffed me much, saying I was a lucky dog to get off my work so easily, and sardonically wishing me joy with the Flower of the Fjord, as they styled my charmer. Quoted Thompson, as a parting shot:

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger on the shore.

Left alone, I made headway with my Norwegian, for it needed little persuasion on my part to induce sweet Thelma to take pity on my loneliness, to present me to her family and friends, and to guide me, in her free, artless way, to all the places round where the prettiest views were obtainable, where the rarest flowers grew, where the best fishing could be had. I had already gained the good graces of gruff, staunch Wolf, by sundry surreptitious tit-bits, and with him leaping and bounding beside us, as though I had been his master all my life, we two went forth to the hills and dales, gathering the blue gentians from the snow-topped heights, the frost-lilies from the white-mantled tarns, the whortleberries from the sunny slopes.

At last I spoke to her of love, pouring out my passion-laden heart, and vowing to give up my native land and live at Trondhjem for her sweet sake, if so she desired. She listened gravely, not saying a word till I had finished, and, holding her soft, warm hands in mine, looked appealingly into her face for the verdict. Then she spoke; her words at once a message of pleasure and pain.

"I will not deny that I love you better than all the ruddy-haired wooers who daily sit in my father's hall," she said, "and—and I could not if I would. But my heart misgives me of the future. My people like not the dark southerners as kinsfolk, deeming golden locks a necessary thing in all good wives and husbands. Also, my parents design me to be the bride of young Olaf Jonson, whose temper is quick, and whose anger is to be dreaded. So I fear, and could almost wish that you had never come at all; and yet——"

"And yet," I broke in eagerly, "you are glad that I have?" She did not speak, but eyes have a language all their own, more easily understood and wider-spread than Volapuk, and her eyes answered "Yes." "As to all other things," I continued, "I care nothing for them now you have told me your love. Tell me, though, if you have any liking for Olaf, the tall, bronze-faced farmer who glared at me so evilly yesterday?"

Thelma shuddered.

"I distrust him, I almost hate him," said she. "It is so different with you, to whom my heart went out when I first saw you on the ship, as the perfume of the rose goes out to meet the strong west wind."

"As my soul longed for you that day, my Thelma, my Northern Rose," I said, extending the simile. "And, now you have confessed what I desired you to, I declare that I will never leave this place until you are my wife, and are willing to go, let whoever or whatever will stand in our way."

"We will hope for the best, Harold, my love," replied the girl, "but I fear."

Then we talked and acted after the usual manner of lovers, which is a tale too often told to need repeating here. The days sped on thereafter with a quiet happiness, save for the scowls of Olaf and the frowns of Brun, my dear one's father; and never was autumn so short as that. It seemed but a few days after the yacht had left the fjord when the snow began to settle thickly on the grand, grey, fir-clad hills and bare, scraggy heights; when the lonely cow with heavy collar was brought in and tethered in her stall; when the large, thick rye-cakes made in summer were taken down from the ceilings; when the miserable mongrel dogs that haunt the towns began to make night restless with their hungry howling; and when the skates were cleaned and oiled, and winter furs put on.

The lady-ferns had already turned to vivid red in the breath of the keen cold winds when Thelma and I joined hands in troth; but not till Christmas Eve, when the Yule-logs brightly blazed on the cosy hearths, could I claim her for my own with the goodwill of her people. This was how it came about.

All day long the jolly folks had been making ready for the festival of the Nativity, and when most of the country people had taken away their bulky purchases from the town, driving their sledges merrily over the snow, their comical-faced, short-bodied horses, thick of neck, stout of leg, large of head, and shaggy of mane and tail, plunging through the drifts with an eagerness

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that told of desire to be at home, I wandered up a steep and slippery path to a walk that wound along the edge of the fjord, where Thelma often went, braving its dangers with her native hardihood.

The waters of the creek looked purple black in the night shades, and its surface was unruffled by aught save the long, powerful, sweeping strokes of a fisherman pulling home. I was revelling in the solemn silence of the twilight, broken only by the dripping of the water from his oars, or the occasional tinkle of far-off sleigh bells, and thinking, as I scrambled from point to point, how easy it was to imagine that solitary boatman an ancient Viking, and to people the shores with the shades of the hardy heroes of the past, and the inlet with their long, low, war-dragons, painted and shield-hung ready for the sea, when a fresh sound fell upon my ears, and turning an angle in the cliff, I came face to face with a scene that sent a shiver through me and caused my heart, for a moment, to stand still with horror.

There, on the very verge of the frost-bound rock knelt my darling, her golden hair streaming over her shapely shoulders, and her white, dimpled hands locked together in supplication to a threatening form that towered before her. I took a step forward, and saw that it was Olaf, my rival, transformed by the culmination of his long-smouldering jealousy into a reckless, wild-eyed maniac.

His clenched hand was before Thelma's eyes, and it would need but one strong thrust, swiftly delivered, to send her headlong over the treacherous brink into the calm, cold waters far below. Shaded by the overhanging cliff, and unheard by them in their fearful situation, I crept softly nearer to the twain, fearing to betray my presence till I was close enough to act. However, I could hear what they were saying.

"Choose between us and here!" growled Olaf, shaking his knotted fingers at the frightened girl; "choose between your love for that cursed foreigner and a wedding with me."

"Have you no mercy?" pleaded Thelma, never taking her beseeching eyes from his face.

"None, as you have had none for my sufferings," hissed the madman, chafing under that earnest gaze. "You will marry me, or one touch of my hand sends you over here to seek Death for your bridegroom. Ha! ha! he will welcome you well, will that hoary old man, who has married so many; and a loving wife you will make him, lying cold and white under the salt water! Come, make up your mind, my trembling one."

He laughed horribly, and the sound echoed strangely from the stolid hills. I was within a few paces now, still unheard, unseen. Her eyes flashing with a sudden resolve, as one in the last strait, Thelma answered him: "How can I wed one who seeks my life? How can I forsake him whom I love? Yet, Olaf, let me go, if you have any heart in you."

He laughed again—a fierce, mocking laugh—drawing back his arm, and muttering: "Die, then, and see if he you love will come to you down there!" In a moment I had leaped to his side and pinioned him, holding him, writhing in my grasp, whilst I waited for Thelma to rise to her feet.

With a cry of joy and relief she sprang up, heedless of the insecure foothold, and the next thing I knew she had slipped and fallen, and was disappearing over the icy edge. I released Olaf instantly, and, springing towards her with frenzied impulse, caught her upthrown left hand in my right, and a jutting point of rock in my left, and hung there, supporting us both by that precarious hold. Her whole weight was upon my right arm, for the rock-face, that went sheer down a hundred yards or more to the fjord, was hard and smooth, giving no footing, whilst, tried as I was by the strain, I could not raise myself to firmer ground.

"Do not lose heart," I said to Thelma, looking down at the white, troubled face; "I will hang here as long as my muscles will hold together. Keep fast hold of me with both hands."

"Some boatman will surely see us, or hear our cries," said she, "before the darkness falls. But where is Olaf?"

Where? indeed. Even as she spoke I glanced up and met his evil gaze. He was standing over us, noting my position, exulting in the certainty of a mad revenge.

"I am not far away, sweetheart," he jeered, "not so far that I cannot bid you two farewell for ever, while your hands are clasped and your fates bound in one. Say, will you give me sweet Thelma for my wife, foreigner, or take her with you now?"

My heart sank, and I must own that in that fearful strait my nerve failed. Whose would not have done? My sinews were cracking under the terrible strain, and shadows spun round before my eyes. Yet I held on, endeavouring to temporise with my enemy, even promising him his wish.

With a madman's cunning, however, he saw my intention, shaking his head like a knowing child; and raising his foot, brought it down with sudden force upon the hand with which I grasped the little pinnacle of rock which alone kept us from destruction. The pain was keen—all the keener because of the cold—and I winced, but still held on.

A dog barked in the distance, and a fisherman below, hearing our cries and seeing our plight, was pulling for the shore with might and main. But the night was very near—already the sun was half hidden beyond the hills—and we were lost unless I could gain time.

"I cannot hold much longer," whispered Thelma faintly.

"Nor I," I answered. The stress was growing worse each second, and my fingers, numbed with the icy air, were gradually relaxing. Sudden as a flash of light a new thought struck me. "Grasp me round the waist, if you can," I said, "so I can get my right hand free."

In moments of peril we can do what at other times is impossible, and Thelma complied with my request, whilst I clutched the jutting crag with the disengaged hand.

But red-haired Olaf was not to be baulked of his fiendish purpose easily, and finding kicking of no avail to loosen my grip, calmly knelt down and drew his great knife from his pocket, opening it with malignant deliberation. I saw his object at a glance; the blood seemed to freeze in my veins from terror, and I nearly screamed aloud with fright. Down flashed the keen-edged blade upon my left hand, cutting a deep red gash across, though instinctively I drew it aside. Again it fell, and the hand, weakened by its previous work, hung limp and nerveless at my side.

I supported our united weight on my right arm alone now, and the joints and knuckles felt on fire with the awful tension. Only a little longer could I hold, when once more the cruel knife was raised to strike. I waited, catching my breath and gritting my teeth with despairing determination. Olaf held the weapon in air a moment, enjoying my distress—how long those seconds seemed—and then it fell, but not upon my hand.

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A bulky, shaggy form, with angry growl, rushed up the path out of the darkness, and, leaping on the would-be murderer, diverted his aim and sent him sprawling on his back within an inch of the precipice edge. He struggled, striking at the dog fiercely, but Wolf sprang aside, and missing his footing on the frosty brink, the wretched man reeled a moment, then fell down, down, into the black, deep waters. There was a faint splash, a little struggling, and all was still.

Then strong arms pulled me up until I could embrace the point of rock firmly, and the same arms raised Thelma to the level of the path.

Exhausted, weary, we lay there helpless, while the kindly fisherman chafed our numbed limbs and bound up my bleeding hand.

* * * * *

So we were saved, thanks to faithful Wolf and the boatman Bjorne, and when we went together that Christmas Eve into old Brun's halls all aglow with light and resonant with merrymaking, and told our tale, they cheered us till the rafters rang again, drinking to our health and happiness with boisterous applause, even the stern-faced host himself relenting and bidding me welcome in his house as a son.

What cared I, then, that in my black hair they found some threads of grey, and on my forehead removeless wrinkles? What care I now that my right arm is weak in the shoulder-joint, and cannot lift a heavy weight? The Flower of the Fjord is my own sweet blossom now, and I am amply paid for the agonies I underwent to gain her.

When the days lengthened and the nights crept in again, we wandered forth together as before, culling the early snowdrops and the lovely fifa-flowers, taking Wolf with us always, and stopping often to chat with staunch old Bjorne. The Wolmar fire burnt brightly at our betrothal, and when the midsummer festival came round again, it found us man and wife. I am staying in Trondhjem now, and when my darling asks if I do not long for my own land I can only say:

"*This* is my own land, now, my Thelma, for all that I love most is here, and I think there is no place so beautiful on all the earth."

And when I ask if she regrets that she has not married one of her own ruddy-haired countrymen, she says, her soft hand stealing into mine:

"There is no countryman I love like you, Dear Heart, so *why* should I regret?"

I have no answer to make to this, but we understand each other, and love's silences are more expressive than many words.

GEORGE C. WALLIS.

THE VENGEANCE OF PADRE ARROYO.

PILAR, from her little window just above the high wall surrounding the big house set apart for the women neophytes of the mission of Santa Ines, watched, morning and evening, for Andreo, as he came and went from the *rancheria*. The old women kept the girls busy spinning, weaving, sewing; but age nods, and youth is crafty.

The tall young Indian, who was renowned as the best huntsman of all the neophytes, and who supplied Padre Arroyo's table with deer and quail, never failed to keep his ardent eyes fixed upon the grating so long as it lay within the line of his vision. One day he went to Padre Arroyo and told him that Pilar was the prettiest girl behind the wall, and that she should be his wife. But the kind, stern old Padre shook his head.

"You are both too young; wait another year, my son, and if thou art still in the same mind thou shalt have her."

Andreo dared make no protest, but he asked permission to prepare a home for his bride. The Padre gave it willingly. At the end of a month he had built him a cabin among the willows of the *rancheria*, a little apart from the others. When the cabin was built his impatience slipped its curb, and he besought the priest to allow him to marry.

"Orion," said Padre Arroyo sternly—he called all his neophytes after the celebrities of earlier days—"have I not told thee thou must wait a year? Do not be impatient, my son; she will keep."

Andreo, dejected, left the Padre. As he passed Pilar's window, and saw a pair of wistful black eyes behind the grating, his heart took fire. No one was within sight. By a series of signs he made his lady understand that he would place a note beneath a certain hole in the wall.

Pilar, as she went to and fro under the fruit-trees in the garden, or sat in the long corridor weaving baskets, watched that hole with fascinated eyes. She knew that Andreo was tunnelling it, and one day his work was accomplished. But how to get the note? The old women's eyes were very sharp when the girls were in front of the grating! Then the civilising development of Christianity upon the heathen intellect triumphantly asserted itself. Pilar, too, conceived a brilliant scheme. That night the Padre, who encouraged any industry, no matter how eccentric, gave her a little garden of her own—a patch where she could raise sweet-peas and Castilian roses.

Pilar spent every spare hour bending over her "patch," and the hole, at first no bigger than a pin's head, was larger at each setting of the sun behind the mountain. The old women, scolding in the corridor, called to her not to forget vespers.

On the third evening, kneeling on the damp ground, she drew from the little tunnel a thin slip of wood,

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covered with the labour of sleepless nights. She hid it in her smock, then ran with shaking knees and prostrated herself before the altar. That night the moon streamed through her grating, and she deciphered the fact that Andreo had loosened eight "adobes"—the clay bricks—above her garden, and would await her every midnight.

Pilar sat up in bed and glanced about the room with terrified delight. It took her but a moment to decide the question; love had kept her awake too many nights. The neophytes were asleep; as they turned now and again, their narrow beds of hide, suspended from the ceiling, swung too gently to awaken them.

Pilar slipped from the bed and looked through the grating. Andreo was there. She waved her hand and pointed downwards to the wall. Then throwing on the long, coarse, grey smock that was her only garment, crept from the room and down the stair. As she crawled through the opening, Andreo took her hand bashfully, for they had never spoken.

"Come," he said, "we must be away before dawn."

They stole past the long Mission, crossing themselves as they glanced askance at the ghostly row of pillars; past the guard-house, where the sentries slept at their post; past the *rancheria*; then, springing upon a waiting mustang, dashed down the valley.

Glancing over Andreo's shoulder she watched the mass of brown and white buildings, the winding river, fade into the mountain. Then they began to ascend an almost perpendicular steep. The horse followed a narrow trail; the crowding trees and shrubs clutched the blanket and smock of the riders. After a time trail and scene grew white; the snow lay on the heights.

"Where do we go?" she asked.

"To Zaca Lake, on the very top of the mountain, miles above us. No one has ever been there but myself. Often I have shot deer and birds beside it. They will never find us there."

The sun rose over the mountains of the east; the crystal moon sank in the west. Andreo sprang from the weary mustang and carried Pilar to the lake.

A sheet of water, round as a whirlpool, but calm and silvern, lay amidst the sweeping willows and pine-forested peaks. The snow glittered beneath the trees, but a canoe was on the lake, a hut on the marge.

Padre Arroyo tramped up and down the corridor, smiting his hands together. The Indians bowed lower than usual as they passed, and hastened their steps. The soldiers scoured the country for the bold violaters of Mission Law. No one asked Padre Arroyo what he would do with the sinners, but all knew that punishment would be sharp and summary.

A week later, in the early morning, Padre Arroyo sat in the corridor. Suddenly he leant forward on his staff and lifted the heavy brown hood of his habit from his ear. Down the road, winding from the Eastern Mountains, came the echo of galloping footfalls.

He rose expectantly and waddled out upon the plaza, shading his eyes with his hand. A half-dozen soldiers, riding closely about a horse bestridden by a stalwart young Indian, supporting a woman, were rapidly approaching the Mission. The Padre returned to his seat and awaited their coming.

The soldiers escorted the culprits to the corridor; two held the horse while they descended, then led it away, and Andreo and Pilar were alone with the priest. The bridegroom placed his arm about the bride and looked defiantly at Padre Arroyo, but Pilar drew her long hair about her face and locked her hands together.

Padre Arroyo folded his arms and regarded them with lowered brows, a sneer on his mouth.

"I have new names for you both," he said, in his thickest voice. "Antony, I hope thou hast enjoyed thy honeymoon. Cleopatra, I hope thy little toes did not get frostbitten. You both look as if food had been scarce. And your garments have gone in good part to clothe the brambles, I fear. It is too bad you could not wait a year and move in your cabin at the *rancheria*, by a good fire, and with plenty of frijoles and tortillas in your stomachs."

He dropped his sarcastic tone, and rising to his feet, extended his right arm with a gesture of malediction. "Do you comprehend the enormity of your sin?" he shouted. "Have you not learned on your knees that the fires of Hell are the rewards of unlawful love? Do you not know that even the year of sackcloth and ashes I shall impose here on earth will not save you from those flames a million times hotter than the mountain fire, than the roaring pits in which evil Indians torture one another? A hundred years of their scorching breath, of roasting flesh, for a week of love."

Andreo looked somewhat staggered but unrepentant. Pilar burst into loud sobs of terror. The Padre stared long and gloomily at the flags of the corridor. Then he raised his head and looked sadly at his lost sheep.

"My children," he said solemnly, "my heart is wrung for you. You have broken the laws of God and of the Holy Catholic Church, and the punishments therein are awful. Can I do anything for you, excepting to pray? You shall have my prayers, my children. But that is not enough; I cannot—ay, I cannot endure the thought that you shall be damned. Perhaps—" again he stared meditatively at the stones; then, after an impressive silence, raised his eyes. "Heaven vouchsafes me an idea, my children. I will make your punishment here so bitter that Almighty God in His mercy will give you but a few years of purgatory after death. Come with me."

Pilar, almost fainting, shrank back as they reached the narrow, spiral stair which led downwards to the cells.

"Ay, I shall die, my Andreo," she cried. "Ay, my father, have mercy."

"I cannot, my children," said the Padre sadly. "It is for the salvation of your souls."

"Mother of God, when shall I see thee again, my Pilar?" answered Andreo. "But, ay, the memory of that week on the mountain will keep us both alive."

Padre Arroyo descended the stair and awaited them at the foot. Separating them, and taking each by the hand, he pushed Andreo ahead and dragged Pilar down the narrow passage.

At its end he took a great bunch of keys from his pocket, and, raising both hands, commanded them to kneel. He said a long prayer in a loud, monotonous voice which echoed and re-echoed down the dark hall, and made Pilar shriek with terror. Then he fairly hurled the marriage ceremony at them, and made the couple repeat after him the responses. When it was over, "Arise," he said. The poor things stumble to their feet, and Andreo caught Pilar in a last embrace.

"Now bear your incarceration with fortitude, my children; and if you do not beat the air with your groans I will let you out in a week. Do not hate your old father, for love alone makes him severe, but pray, pray, pray."

And then he locked them both in the same cell!

GERTRUDE ATHERTON.

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CHAPTER I.

ONE evening I entered the smoking-room of my club, and saw a few friends of mine ensconced around the table in a distant corner. They were talking so seriously that they took no notice of my entrance.

"I do not think this sort of thing ought to be allowed," one of them was just saying as I joined the group. "It's nothing more or less than a disgrace to the society which tolerates it—which enjoys it, rather."

"My dear fellow," answered another of the party, "half the charm is in the danger. The risk that poor woman runs of killing herself is exactly what attracts hundreds of people there to see her. It's the very spice of the whole performance. Our civilisation is only skin deep—the barbarian is just beneath the surface. Old Rome had its gladiatorial shows—we in modern Europe find a faint excitement in watching men and women jeopardising their necks for the sake of a living."

"What in the world are you talking about?" I asked.

"About Julie," was the reply. "You haven't seen her? Then, my dear fellow you ought to do so—she's really worth it. The way in which she twists and throws herself about on the trapeze swung right up among the rafters of the building is enough to make one turn cold all over. It's fearful. She must have a nerve of iron, though she is such a slight and delicate-looking thing." The speaker pulled out his watch at this point. "Look here," he continued, "Julie doesn't come on till ten o'clock or after. There's plenty of time. Let's all go together and see her."

I held out for a minute or two, for I never much cared for performances of that kind. But all the rest seemed anxious to go, and not wishing to appear unsociable, I at length yielded, and agreed to make one of the party.

I do not think that I shall ever forget the appearance of Mademoiselle Julie as she walked on to the stage that night and stood kissing her hand to the excited crowd with which the hall was filled. She was a woman of delicate and almost fragile build. I had expected to see a woman of masculine type, coarse in development, and vulgar in manner. But Julie was nothing of the kind. There was something so charmingly modest and retiring about her—something so simple and innocent—that it was only by an effort that one could persuade oneself that the figure upon the stage was really the famous acrobat of whose daring feats there had been so much talk

Indeed, for the moment all thought of the coming performance was lost in silent admiration of the beautiful picture which was thus presented to the gaze. A kind of thrill went through the expectant crowd, and a perceptible hush fell upon the people before their pent-up feelings could find vent in a wild outburst of applause. And no wonder. A more perfectly lovely woman than Julie it has never been my lot to behold.

There was something dazzling—something intoxicating in her beauty.

As you looked at her you lost for the time being all remembrance of her profession. You thought only of the perfect features; the clear, lustrous eyes; the light, supple form; the unconscious grace of every attitude and movement. It was only with a shock that you suddenly woke up to the recollection that after all Julie was only a circus-woman, a performer of athletic feats, whose life, could the truth about it only be known, would probably turn out to be one of misery and poverty, and, most likely, of degradation.

But no thought of what Julie might be behind those mysterious scenes came now to break the spell of fascination which held the crowd breathless and still. Every eye was intent to follow her as she carelessly sprang forward and caught the bar, which had been let down almost to a level with the stage. Then, holding easily to this, she was carried aloft, up—up—over the heads of the people, up, beyond the gas jets; up, till she reached the trapeze which had been swung for her among the very rafters of that lofty building. One light spring from bar to bar, and there she was, supported only by her hands at that dizzy height, and gazing down, with the same strange, daring, unreal smile, at the sea of wondering, upturned faces a hundred feet beneath.

No wonder that we held our breath, and that some even turned away, afraid to watch her. It seemed at times as though she were bound to fall. The giddy recklessness with which she flung herself out into space, and caught the bar again as though it were only by accident that she did so; her sudden whirls and unexpected gyrations, the constant succession of difficult feats, performed so rapidly that the eye could hardly follow her movements, made the brain reel, and almost caused the heart to stand still in its pulsations.

How those about me behaved I do not know, but I sat like one entranced, with eyes that refused to quit the slight woman's form yonder above me, and a hollow

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feeling of sickness within, which I should attempt in vain to describe.

At length the spell was broken. Amid the deafening plaudits of the spectators, Julie descended and stood once more upon the stage, with cheeks flushed by her exertions, but otherwise apparently unmoved by the performance which she had just gone through. While she was being recalled again and again, returning to bow her acknowledgments with the same old unreal smile, I became aware of two men standing at my side whom I had not observed before.

One was a stout, dark, vulgar-looking fellow, seedily dressed and smelling strongly of stale tobacco; the other was tall, handsome in a sense, with two diamond rings on his fingers and a diamond pin of enormous dimensions at his breast. Judging from the expressions on their faces, they had been observing the recent exhibition with the coolness of professional men.

"She'll do," said the vulgar man, nodding approvingly.

"Yes," answered his bediamonded companion, "she'll do right enough, if you only get her in time. Of course she'll kill herself sooner or later, so you must get her as early as possible."

"She's got another six weeks to run here," the other said.

"That's bad," was the reply. "I don't know how long she's been at it, but the chances of her breaking her neck before another six weeks are out are enormous. A pretty penny she's been in Bowder's pocket, to be sure."

I turned away sickened. These were the proprietors or managers of some other place of amusement, I supposed. But I could no longer listen to such conversation.

On the way home we talked of nothing but Julie. We had all been strangely fascinated by her wonderful beauty, and concurred in pronouncing her performance the most daring thing of the kind we had ever seen.

"She'll do," said the vulgar man.

"It'll be another version of the old story of the pitcher and the fountain, I am afraid," said one of us; "Julie may go through that kind of thing for a thousand nights, but she's almost certain to meet with an accident at last. One mistake does it, you see. The misjudgment of the hundredth part of a second or of an inch, and it's all over with her."

"And she does not seem to have a twinge of fear," I said.

"Certainly not; that would prove fatal. All such feats as hers must be done in cold blood, or they cannot be done at all. The slightest nervousness, hesitation, self-doubt, would destroy that perfect rhythm of nerve and muscle which alone makes them possible.

Just before we parted that night a sudden thought struck me.

"Did you notice——" I began; but I interrupted myself with a laugh and a contemptuous, "After all, 'twas nothing."

"Notice what?" chimed my companions in a chorus.

"Well, did you notice," I said, "the peculiar searching glance that Julie cast round the house the moment she got on to the stage?"

Strangely enough, every one had noticed it.

"It was exactly as if she were looking for someone," I remarked.

And everyone agreed that it was so.

CHAPTER II.

MADEMOISELLE JULIE'S performance had taken more effect upon me than I realised that same night. I went to bed, supposing that by the morning I should have forgotten all about her, but in this I was entirely mistaken. The recollection of her slight girlish figure and strangely beautiful face haunted me for days, and before the week was out I was impelled by a force I could not understand, and did not stop to analyse, to go and see her again.

I went, not only once, but four or five times. I did not enjoy watching her; her wild daring turned me cold and sick, and I breathed a sigh of relief when she once more descended to the stage. Still, I did not seem to be able to keep away from the place. The charm of that woman's presence was too strong, when combined with the morbid and sensational fascination of her exhibition; and again and again I found myself in the heated and unwholesome atmosphere of that crowded hall. I learnt afterwards from others that their experiences had been similar to my own.

It was at this time that, for the most part, I became acquainted with Julie's history. Little by little, setting with the utmost care the purely mythological from the genuine elements in the thousand stories which went the round about her, I succeeded in piecing together a kind of hypothetical biography which threw a good deal of light on her present character and conduct. After the occurrence of the incident, which I shall presently narrate, I was able to fill up the gaps in my history and to find the complete explanation of the woman's strange and wild career.

She was the child of circus performers. Her father was a clown, her mother an equestrian lady. From her very earliest days Julie had been before the public. Even as a child she had attracted a good deal of attention by her daring and natural grace; and as she ripened into girlhood, and developed the marvellous and resistless fascination of which I have spoken, she came to be in ever increasing request. She travelled with

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her parents all over Europe, as well as in the United States; and everywhere she went she met with the most astonishing success. During all this time, however, she had habitually performed with the protection of a net.

Two years before her sudden advent in London, Julie was fulfilling an engagement in Paris, when, as frequently happened, a young man who had seen her again and again, besought an introduction. More persistent or more fortunate than the tribes of suitors who everywhere followed her steps, young Zyll—for such was his name—at length found his way into her presence. He was madly, passionately in love with her, he said. In her alone now rested the whole happiness of his life. Would she—could she—refuse him when he came to throw his life and his possessions at her feet?

I know not how long Zyll urged his suit, but at length Julie lent him a willing ear. Handsome, elegant, attractive, he possessed every gift likely to prove availing with a girl of Julie's warm and highly-strung temperament. She returned his love with all the ardour of her nature, and presently forsook the circus-ring at his request.

Months went by, when the shadow fell, and the tragedy of Julie's life began. Her lover tired of her—his passing passion was satisfied; and do what she would, she could not succeed in regaining his wandering affections. One day he made a journey to Paris, on business—purely on business; and he never returned. Hopeless and broken-hearted, Julie went back to her old life, only retaining his name as the one fond memento of her short, sweet dream of bliss.

She went back to her old life, but not in the old way. Everything that made existence bright to her belonged to the past, and with nothing to live for, nothing to hope for, nothing to care for, she grew reckless of life.

Danger went for nothing with her now. Feats at which she would have shuddered a year ago seemed easy and simple in her present state of heedless, thoughtless daring. Bold and venturesome as she always had been, she was a hundredfold more bold and venturesome than ever now.

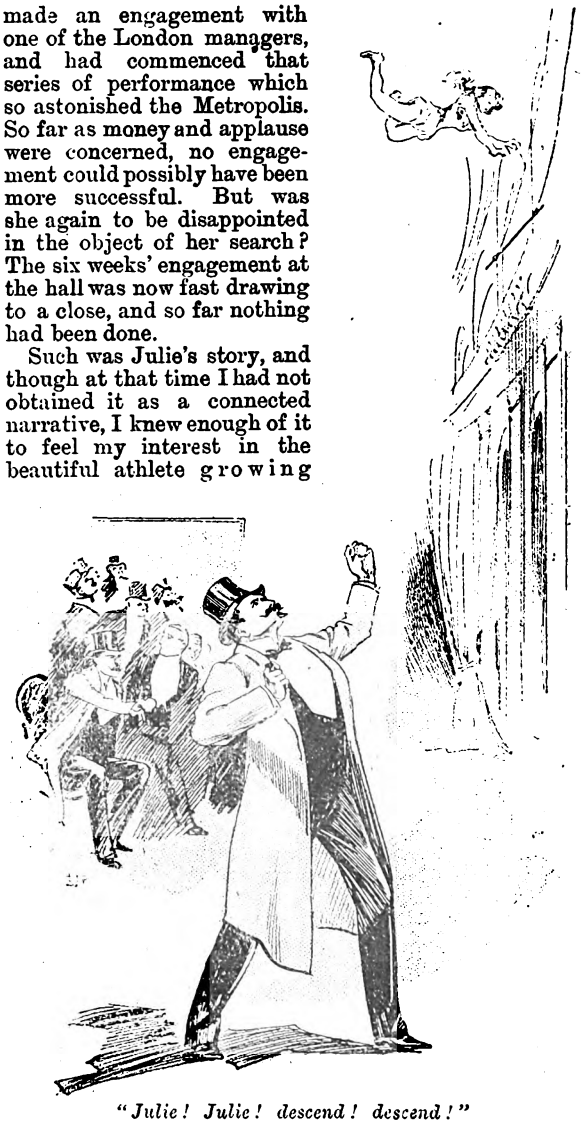
She seemed to have lost every sensation of fear—to have forgotten what the word danger meant. When those about her remonstrated and warned, she only laughed her light, silvery laugh. "*Ce n'est rien—rien—rien,*" she said carelessly, and that was all they ever got out of her.

I have said that she had nothing left to live for; but that is not quite correct. She still kept one object before her—the rediscovery of her lost and faithless lover. The search was a wild one, the chances that its end would ever be attained seemed, indeed, extremely remote. But Julie, keeping her intentions to herself, went from city to city and from country to country, trusting ever that one day she might find some traces of Zyll, and in spite of a thousand disappointments, hopeful still that ultimately she might meet with success.

"It is not as if I were a woman of private life," she would say to herself; "wherever I go my name becomes known. One day he will hear it mentioned, and if it is only out of curiosity he will come and see me. Then, when he knows what danger I run in every performance, his heart may be touched once again, and he may find that still he loves me too well to let me break my neck. *Allons.* I must find him sooner or later. Do not let us be cast down."

Nearly a year after her return to public life, Mdlle. Julie, as she was professionally called, heard accidentally that Zyll was in England. Before long she had made an engagement with one of the London managers, and had commenced that series of performance which so astonished the Metropolis. So far as money and applause were concerned, no engagement could possibly have been more successful. But was she again to be disappointed in the object of her search? The six weeks' engagement at the hall was now fast drawing to a close, and so far nothing had been done.

Such was Julie's story, and though at that time I had not obtained it as a connected narrative, I knew enough of it to feel my interest in the beautiful athlete growing more keen than ever. I had become quite a constant patron of Bowder's entertainment, and, by dint of continually watching the performance, had by this time grown sufficiently accustomed to its danger to be able to take my place among the crowd without those feelings of sickness and horror which I had at first experienced.



"Julie! Julie! descend! descend!"

CHAPTER III.

AT length the last night of Julie's engagement in London had come. All the necessary arrangements were made, and she was to start the first thing the next morning for Liverpool, where she was to perform until Christmas. I had made up my mind to see her for the last time before her departure, and started off quite early in the evening, knowing that on such an occasion the number of spectators would be very great.

I was not deceived. When I reached the hall the entrances were already blocked by large crowds, waiting

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for the opening of the doors. Evidently it was to be quite a gala night. However, not caring to take my chance in such a multitude, I quietly walked round to the manager of the Hall's hotel, close at hand, and got him to give me an order which I knew would admit me to a good seat, even after the doors were thrown open. Expecting that I was to meet one of my friends there that evening, I made him write the order for two, and then strolled off to look for my friend, feeling secure as to my own place.

I waited half an hour after the appointed time, and as he did not appear I determined to give him up and enter at once. But just as I was about to pass in at the door my attention was attracted by the figure of a man, who was engaged almost at my side in studying the programme bill with the most extraordinary interest.

He was a tall and very handsome man, faultlessly dressed, with the manner and appearance of a gentleman, and probably about thirty years of age. As I stood for a moment looking at him with some curiosity, he turned abruptly on his heel, with a very excited movement, and, catching sight of me, touched his hat. This action confirmed me in the already formed opinion that he was a foreigner.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, speaking rapidly and with ill-concealed emotion, "excuse me, sir, but are you going in there?"

I announced that such was my intention.

"Can you tell me," he continued, with the same tone and manner, "if there is anything there worth seeing?"

"Certainly," I replied. "they give a very good entertainment."

"H'm." He paused for a moment as if he were hesitating as to whether he should proceed. "And—and this Mademoiselle Julie, is her performance good? I am a Frenchman and a stranger in London," he added, by way of an explanation.

I told him that it was Julie more than anyone else who was just then filling the house night after night.

"And what is she like?" he asked quickly, looking straight into my face with his keen grey eyes.

"There is her photograph." I answered, pointing to a frame which stood just inside the door.

I watched him approach the frame and stagger back as he caught sight of Julie's face. I touched his arm, and, as he turned in response I saw that his face was ghastly pale.

"I—I must go in and see her," he said, passing his hand nervously across his brow.

"The house is very full now," I said, "and you will have great difficulty in finding even standing room. But see, I have a ticket which will admit two. If you will come with me I shall be pleased."

He stammered out some hardly comprehensible words of thanks, and we went in together. The house was indeed crammed, but there was still the open space kept clear as usual beneath the trapeze.

At length ten o'clock came. A kind of buzz of anticipation ran through the expectant crowd; the orchestra gave one loud, long-drawn chord, and Julie appeared, brighter, more beautiful, more goddess-like than ever. The man at my side gave a bound upon his seat, and an exclamation which happily was drowned in the deafening cheers with which Julie was welcomed.

I saw the dark, lustrous eyes wander as usual over the upturned faces, but though they appeared for a moment to rest on the very spot where we were sitting, they evidently saw us not. But, none the less, they seemed to have a strange effect upon my companion, who sat white and trembling, his starting eyes fixed upon the athlete with an intensity of meaning and despair which I shall never, never forget. "*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*" I heard him mutter beneath his breath, and instinctively I seized his arm. His hand touched mine as I did so. It was deadly cold, and the fingers were closed in a convulsive grasp.

And lay, a mangled, quivering mass at her lover's feet.

With the same old careless smile, which, as I knew so well now, was only assumed, Julie sprang forward and caught the bar; and then, once more, up she went, above the orchestra, above the gas-lamps, up, up in the very roof of the building. There she hung again upon that fragile support, gazing down from the dizzy height, swinging idly, carelessly, until, with a mad impulse, she threw herself over, and with a sudden turn of the body, sat lightly upon her terrible seat.

Never had she seemed more daring and more reckless than on that fearful evening. The vast crowd of spectators seemed with one accord to hold their breaths.

"*Mon Dieu!* It is terrible!" cried the man at my side, suddenly giving vent to his pent-up emotion; before I could do anything to hold him back, before even I could realise what he was about, he had disengaged himself from my grasp, and had sprung forward into the open space directly beneath the trapeze.

"Julie! Julie!" he cried hoarsely, "descend! descend! It is I—François! For the love of Heaven come down!"

The orchestra paused as he spoke — a death-like silence fell upon that horror-stricken crowd. Paralysed, no one moved. But the voice, the well-known, the long-lost, the still-beloved voice, had reached the dizzy height where Julie hung. It was too much. A faint scream from above, echoed by one fearful heart-rending shriek from below, and then Julie fell straight, like an arrow, into the open space beneath her, and lay, a mangled, quivering mass at her lover's feet.

HAROLD DEWHURST.

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The Pilot's Story.

Only once during the whole of his long career as a pilot had old Jean Strabbe been afraid; and that circumstance was no reflection on his courage, but was born of the superstitions which seem to be a part of the nature of those rough men of the coast. This incident in his life was connected with his own domestic affairs; the story, as told to me, was full of interest.

Ten years ago, the family consisted of Jean Strabbe, his daughter Jeannic and three sons; the mother was dead. Jeannic was nineteen, and three boys twenty-one, twenty-three, and twenty-five respectively. One day Jean was surprised by a visit from Yvon le Gonic, the Captain of a coasting vessel, who, without beating about the bush, asked for the hand of his daughter. Jean scouted the idea; Yvon was twelve years older than his daughter and had the reputation of being a brutal, drunken, low-minded fellow. To give his daughter to such a man, was (in his opinion) to make her miserable for life. But—as the old man said quaintly—he had reckoned without Jeannic. She had made up her mind to marry Yvon; she was sure that she could reclaim him, and she would be his wife come what might.

There was no help for it; so the marriage took place in due course and the two lived in a cottage at the other end of the village.

Yvon le Gonic seemed to have become a changed man; he did not frequent the inn when on shore, as he had hitherto done; he became cleaner in his habits, more respectable in appearance and manners; and he treated his wife, of whom he was seemingly very fond, with every consideration. In short, after nearly a year, Strabbe and his sons began to entertain kindlier and better feelings towards him, and to regret that they had thought so ill of him.

But alas! it was soon over. One day they learnt almost at the same minute that Yvon had either given up or lost his position, and that he and his wife had left the village. Left the village! Jeannic gone, and without a word to her poor distracted father as to their destination!

It was a terrible blow to the old pilot, as well as the boys, for in their rough way they were devoted to their sister. They made inquiries about the fugitives, but without success; and as months went by without news they felt that she was lost to them. Not until two years later did they hear from Jeannic, and then Strabbe received a letter containing three words only: "Come to me." It was signed "Jeannic," and the postmark was that of a small town many miles away.

Strabbe and his boys immediately responded to the call, and that same day they stood by the side of the dying woman. She was just conscious of their presence, and smiled like a happy child. Before sunset she was dead.

From the priest who had attended to her wants at the last Jean gleaned a few details. Soon after settling in the town Yvon had fallen back into his old ways. He had shamefully ill-treated his wife, and, in fact, had behaved just as the old pilot had feared when he first refused to agree to the marriage. Jeannic had died from privation, accelerated by injuries inflicted a few days previously by Yvon in a drunken fit. Yvon had fled, nobody knew whither.

Why had his daughter not written to him? Pride probably had prevented her. So poor Jeannic was buried amid the sobs of the four rough fellows, who returned next day to their home in Penmarch full of vengeful feelings towards Yvon le Gonic.

Three years passed away. Nothing had been heard of Yvon le Gonic at Penmarch.

It was the afternoon of an August day in 1892. Jean and his "boys" sat in the old weather-beaten cottage smoking their pipes and listening to the howling of the storm. A dreadful gale had been blowing since the morning; the sea was dashing furiously upon the rocky coast and around Penmarch Point—such a sea as few would care to be out in, and certainly no Captain in his senses would have deliberately risked his vessel by trying to round the Point in such weather. So the four men had settled themselves down to as quiet a day as possible.

A heavy bang at the door made them all start to their feet. The youngest son opened the door and found himself face to face with a gentlemanly man enveloped in a mackintosh.

"I want Jean Strabbe, the pilot," he said. "Phew! Let me come in out of this!"

The young man stood aside and allowed the stranger to enter.

"Are you Jean Strabbe?" he inquired of the old man, after hastily scrutinising the four.

"I am," replied Strabbe. "But you are wet——"

"No matter," exclaimed the new-comer hurriedly. "See here. I am the agent of Messrs. Duval, of Concarneau. We have a brig off this coast which will inevitably be lost unless she rounds the Point. To do that we want a pilot—a pilot with nerve, for no half-hearted pilot can save the vessel in such a sea as this. The cap-

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tain must have been mad not to have run into J—— and waited. His instructions were to lose no time, but the fool was not told to risk the vessel in this manner. Well, it amounts to this, if that vessel is lost we shall never get the insurance money under the circumstances, and we shall lose immense business by failing to execute this order to time—because if the cargo is lost we cannot carry out the order under a month. So we want a pilot to go out to the vessel, which is beating about out there making signals for a pilot just as though the sea were as smooth as glass—the madman!—and take her round the Point to F——, and we will give ten thousand francs for the job. I am told that you are the only man who is dare-devil enough to undertake the task. Will you do it?"

The agent stopped, quite out of breath with hurried talking and anxiety, and looked at Jean.

"What vessel is it?" asked Strabbe absently, for he was really thinking of the possibility of doing what was required.

"The *Marie*, Captain, Yvon le Gonic," replied the Agent, repeating the formula mechanically.

A cry broke from the lips of the four men simultaneously. "Curse him!" exclaimed Jean through his clenched teeth.

The Agent looked from one to another in bewilderment. "What is it?" he asked.

The old pilot was the first to recover his composure.

"Yvon le Gonic is the greatest rascal on this earth!" he cried vehemently. "Any ship commanded by him is doomed. God is taking vengeance on him for his villainy, and I cannot go out to help him, for that would bring down Heaven's wrath upon me also."

"What nonsense is this?" asked the Agent angrily.

"It is no nonsense," replied Jean solemnly; "I can't do it."

"Yvon ought to know this coast," said the youngest son.

"He doesn't. He wasn't a pilot, and he didn't come this way often."

"If he did know the coast he couldn't save the ship. He is doomed!" exclaimed Strabbe.

"Well," sighed the Agent, "I have done what I could. We can get over the loss of the boat and the business, and perhaps the captain deserves to drown, but I'm sorry for the others. Twelve of them to drown because the captain is a rascal! Poor fellows!"

Jean started; he had forgotten the crew. His face assumed a troubled look. What was he to do? On the one hand, he firmly believed that what he had said was true; but, on the other hand, ought he to allow the twelve men—all with wives and children, maybe—to drown without doing what he could to save them? His superstitious fears made him tremble to undertake this job, and his honest, manly feelings bade him try.

"I will try it!" he exclaimed. "But," (under his breath) "I know I cannot do it. It is God's will."

"I will pay——" began the Agent.

"No!" interrupted the pilot. "I want no money for trying to save my fellow man. Come, boys," turning to his sons, "just a drop of cognac, and out with the boat."

Thirty minutes later they were pulling hard towards the vessel, which was struggling with the waves and lying to as much as possible to avoid the rocks. It was fearfully hard work to pull the boat even for such muscular fellows as the Strabbes, but they bent to the oars with all their might, and made fair headway. Old Jean Strabbe was terribly upset; his nervousness increased as they slowly neared the vessel, and it became evident to his sons that unless he regained possession of himself, he could never accomplish the task of piloting the vessel round the Point. They themselves were not pilots; they were fishermen.

At last, after two hours' hard work and many narrow escapes of being capsized, they reached the *Marie*. A rope was thrown to them, and five minutes later they were on board and their boat hauled up.

With ashen-grey face, Jean Strabbe looked about him with a bewildered air. His superstitious fears, strange as it may seem to us, were rapidly mastering him and rendering him totally unfit for his work.

"Are you a pilot—can you get us out of this fix?" asked a well-known voice gruffly. Jean turned and found himself confronting Yvon le Gonic.

"Yes, Yvon le Gonic! So we meet at last, you villain!"

The Captain uttered a fearful oath as he recognised the father of the woman he had hurried to her death. Forgetting himself for the moment, he let go his hold and stepped forward with uplifted hand to strike the old man; but even as he made the movement a heavy sea caught the ship and made her heel over. Yvon lurched sideways and fell, and before he could recover himself another wave swept over the deck. When it was gone, the Captain had disappeared.

Nothing could be done to save him. Two of the men watched for any trace of him, while the others continued their work on the vessel. A complete change came over Jean with the disappearance of Yvon.

"Heaven has avenged my little Jeannie," he murmured, "and Heaven will now save the crew." His composure returned, and, as though to prove the truth of his remark, the sea became just a little calmer, and the prospect of saving the vessel correspondingly brighter.

Jean's anxiety seemed to vanish entirely now; he had confidence in his own ability, and he believed that the death of Yvon was the sacrifice required by an outraged Providence. He issued his orders calmly, orders which were willingly obeyed by all, including his sons, and the vessel was slowly, but safely, conducted round the Point into port.

And that is the story, for it only remains to be added that the owners insisted—in spite of Jean's remonstrances—in paying over the ten thousand francs which had been offered by their representative.

GEO. DAY.

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The Survival of the Fittest.

DRAGGING itself westward across the dreary plains of Utah, the overland train, from a vantage point in the sky, looked like a small horsehair snake crawling over the earth's surface. The earth—almost the air—was white with the heat of the summer sun. All was vastness, immensity, silence, loneliness; above, the flawless blue; below, those seemingly illimitable plains of reddish yellow, streaked with alkali white, that swam back and forth below the eyes in parallel lines, until far off they melted into a low, long stretch of shivering light, the mocking water mirage at the base of the mountain ranges hundreds of miles away. Encompassed by that horizon there was nothing of life except within that desultory moving train.

Packed in the emigrant, or third-class, car of the train was a crowd of tired, miserable, and dirty people. They looked out listlessly at the passing landscape, or stupidly at each other, or twisted themselves into all sorts of uncomfortable positions on the hard wooden seats in vain efforts to secure a little sleep.

Perhaps the most unprepossessing of them all was a dark-featured, roughly-dressed man. Beside him was a very little girl in a blue dress. His lowering, repellent face had a scowl upon it which suggested the convict or the desperado; but he was neither. The scowl and the unconscious sneer about his ugly mouth were born simply of a long and thoroughly fruitless struggle with misfortune.

Although pretty, it was easy to see that the little girl was his child. She was the solitary ray of sunshine in that railway steerage. Even the dull faces of the people in the carriage took on an expression of tenderness when they looked at her, for she had cheered them during the last three weary days with her joyous laughter and merry play. Just now she was lying asleep on the breast of the ill-favoured-looking man, one chubby hand pressed against his rough, unshaven cheek. It was unnecessary to ask if the child had a mother.

She was a momentous factor in a mighty problem to the man whose arm was about her, and whose knit brows and troubled face showed me how hard it was he studied it. A crazy letter had come to him across the Continent, and he had left the tenements of New York to try and reach the golden land of California. He had started with hardly sufficient money to take himself and child more than half the distance, but he had a confused sort of an idea that he would in some way reach his destination. Better it was, at all events, than to remain in the noisome Hester Street den, where, without work or the prospect of any, his little sum of money would soon be gone.

The station to which his scanty purse had enabled him to buy a ticket for himself and child had been passed hours before, and he was wondering how soon the conductor of the train would discover the shameless imposition he was practising upon the railway company. He had not much longer to wait, for presently the autocrat of the train, in a hurried passage through the carriage, stopped suddenly before him and asked for his ticket.

"Hello, where are you going?"

The man looked up in what was intended as a humble, respectful, and piteous appeal, but his lip curled up over his teeth like that of a harried dog. He could not help it. His voice was mild enough, as he said:

"I am going to California, sir, with my little girl."

The man's looks seems to irritate the not too even temper of the railway official.

"You are, eh? Well, where's your ticket for the rest of the way?"

"If you would please let me go through the train with my little girl," replied the unfortunate one falteringly, "I think I could raise the money."

The baby girl was now wide awake, her big, round, dark eyes fixed wonderingly upon the conductor.

"Go through the train? Not much. Third-class

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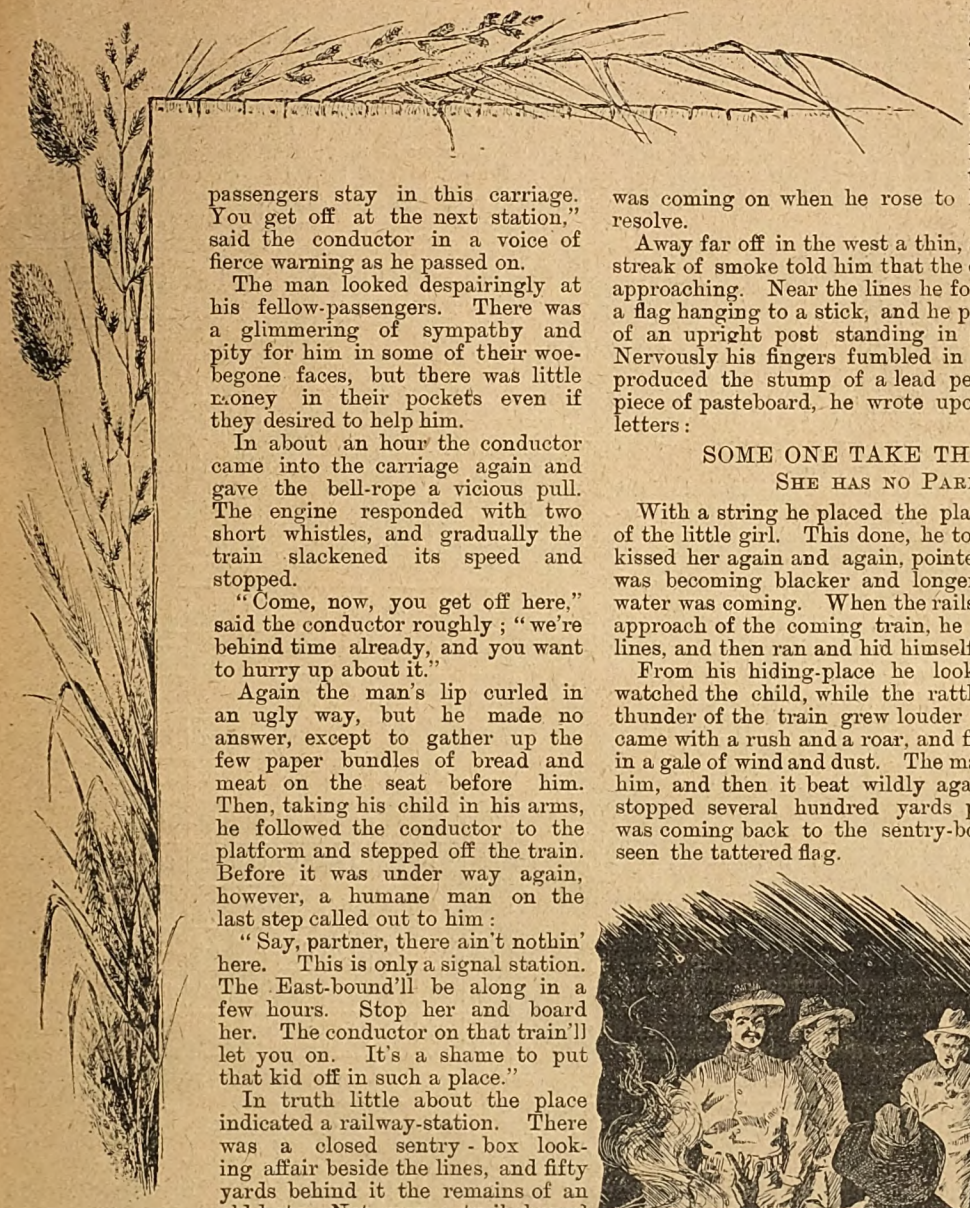


passengers stay in this carriage. You get off at the next station," said the conductor in a voice of fierce warning as he passed on.

The man looked despairingly at his fellow-passengers. There was a glimmering of sympathy and pity for him in some of their woe-begone faces, but there was little money in their pockets even if they desired to help him.

In about an hour the conductor came into the carriage again and gave the bell-rope a vicious pull. The engine responded with two short whistles, and gradually the train slackened its speed and stopped.

"Come, now, you get off here," said the conductor roughly; "we're behind time already, and you want to hurry up about it."

Again the man's lip curled in an ugly way, but he made no answer, except to gather up the few paper bundles of bread and meat on the seat before him. Then, taking his child in his arms, he followed the conductor to the platform and stepped off the train. Before it was under way again, however, a humane man on the last step called out to him:

"Say, partner, there ain't nothin' here. This is only a signal station. The East-bound'll be along in a few hours. Stop her and board her. The conductor on that train'll let you on. It's a shame to put that kid off in such a place."

In truth little about the place indicated a railway-station. There was a closed sentry-box looking affair beside the lines, and fifty yards behind it the remains of an old hut. Not even a trail showed where it was that any human being had visited the spot. And around was the dreary waste of billowy plains and the burning sun overhead.

In the rear of the signal-box its projecting roof had cast a little shade, and here the man sat down upon the ground with his child still in his arms. Strange things, for him, came into his eyes—tears. The little one looked up at him in a puzzled way, and he hastily brushed his hand across his face, and left a broad smudge of railway soot upon his cheek. She clapped her hands, and laughed with glee at his funny face.

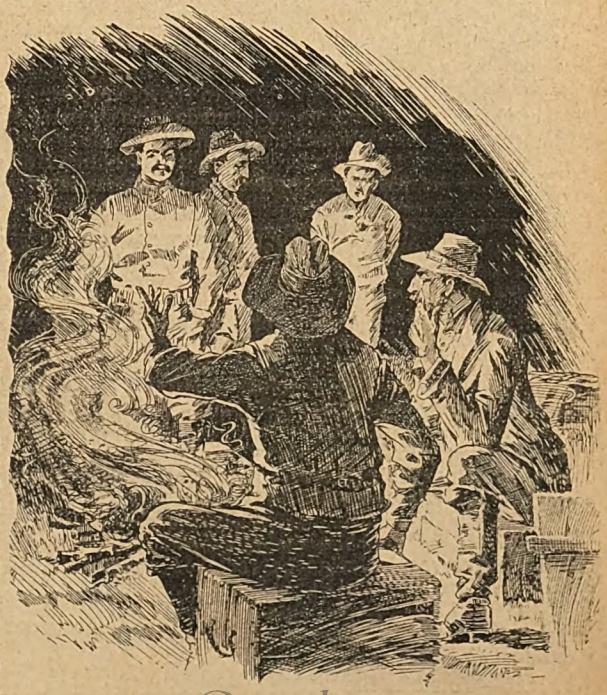
Then thirst came to them—that awful, torturing, unreasoning thirst which the desert alone can give. The child cried for water, and the father left her in the scanty shade and stepped out into the glaring sun. Neither in the sky nor in the parched ground was there a drop of moisture, and he knew it. He returned and tried to comfort her, and then he sat down again, buried his face in his hands, and tried to think. The evening was coming on when he rose to his feet with a new resolve.

Away far off in the west a thin, almost imperceptible, streak of smoke told him that the east-bound train was approaching. Near the lines he found a dirty shred of a flag hanging to a stick, and he placed it in the socket of an upright post standing in front of the house. Nervously his fingers fumbled in his pockets until he produced the stump of a lead pencil. Picking up a piece of pasteboard, he wrote upon it, in great, rough letters:

SOME ONE TAKE THIS CHILD!
SHE HAS NO PARENTS.

With a string he placed the placard round the neck of the little girl. This done, he took her in his arms, kissed her again and again, pointed to the smoke that was becoming blacker and longer, and told her that water was coming. When the rails began to sing of the approach of the coming train, he placed her near the lines, and then ran and hid himself in the hut.

From his hiding-place he looked out and eagerly watched the child, while the rattle and clamour and thunder of the train grew louder in his ears. On it came with a rush and a roar, and flew past the station in a gale of wind and dust. The man's heart died within him, and then it beat wildly again. The train had stopped several hundred yards past the station and was coming back to the sentry-box. The driver had seen the tattered flag.



Sitting by the camp fire.

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As the long train rolled slowly backward, curious and inquiring heads protruded from the windows. The gold-emblazoned conductor stepped off and looked about him in wonder. Not for several moments did he discover the child. Immediately there was a crowd about it, and the placard was passed from hand to hand. A white-jacketed porter came out of a Pullman car and placed a wooden step on the ground before it. He was followed by a lady in black, who descended from the carriage and joined the throng.

A pair of eager, yearning, beseeching eyes watched it all from the hut. To the man in hiding it seemed that the determination of his child's fate never would be reached. Finally he saw the lady in black take the child in her arms, kiss it, and re-enter the carriage. The passengers scrambled back, the conductor waved his hand, and the train moved on.

Then the father came forth and gazed longingly at the departing train—gazed at it until it became smaller and smaller—until it became a dot in the plains—until it vanished—and he knew he was alone.

He stretched himself on the baked ground that night to sleep, but could not. Two little stars in the firmament—modest little stars very near together—reminded him of the eyes of his child, and he tried to fix his thoughts on them and of her, but it was in vain—he could not forget his thirst.

The terrible sun rose the next day and looked down upon him as its victim. He endeavoured to eat some of the bread he had saved, but the dry crumbs were torture to his throat. One thing only was there to do—to follow the lines until an inhabited station was reached. It might be fifty miles—it might be more—but there was no salvation away from the railway.

He started off bravely enough, his longing eyes fixed on the ever receding point where the glistening rails met in the far perspective. But sometimes his gaze wandered even further on to where it surely seemed that blue-green trees were bathing their feet in cool waters.

At noon, when resting for a while, he heard the rattle of an approaching goods train. Hope welled up within him, and he fondly imagined himself sitting by the camp fire at the diggings listening to the oft-repeated tales of the fabulous fortunes to be made in these parts. He stood on the metals and made frantic motions to stop the train. The men merely laughed at him. He did not know he had employed the favourite ruse of tramps. Goods trains were not for the accommodation of such gentry. Nor was it a supposable case that a wayfarer in the desert was unprovided with food or drink, else why should he be there?

After this his progress was very slow. On the third day he came to the end of his journey. He may have been delirious, or he may have been quite sane. A train stopped for him and took him on board. This they always do when they kill a man.

WILLIAM A. TAAFFE.

RESULT OF THE PUZZLE PICTURE COMPETITION

ANNOUNCED IN THE

Double Christmas Number of "SHORT STORIES."

The first correct solution to hand was forwarded by Robert W. Healey, 19, Clarendon Road, Middlesbrough, Yorks. Mr. Healey therefore wins the £10 prize which was offered. The following competitors have since solved the puzzle correctly. I have been very pleased to forward a bound volume of the first series of *Footlight Favourites* (value 7s. 6d.) to each of them as a memento of the contest: E. Bovell, Prestwood, Great Missenden, Bucks; H. S. Uhlrich, Bryntirion, Chelsfield, Kent; J. Hessell, 5, Dean Street, South Shore, Blackpool; Mr. Henderson, 2, Footfield Terrace, Templeogue, Dublin; T. Whatson Lewis, Oswald Road, Oswestry, Salop; Maurice Mungall, 9, Ruthven Street, Hillhead, Glasgow; Albert Vigor, The Stores, Hurstpierpoint, Sussex; Miss Bertie Perrett, 4, The Cedars, Clapham Common, S.W.; H. C. Latimer, Pine Road, Winton, Bournemouth.

The "key" of the original picture is reproduced below:

30	73	34	91	6	66	46	14	78
19	71	37	54	26	84	35	7	61
21	29	55	18	13	53	22	60	27
47	44	96	99	94	68	89	62	9
09	4	74	25	40	86	57	42	31
76	2	92	63	10	32	68	16	1
65	93	45	11	81	90	72	24	9
28	77	67	41	49	36	48	02	17
79	15	69	75	8	56	88	85	82
43	19	38	23	78	83	80	51	33
70	95	89	12	98	52	59	76	3

A TEN-POUND PRIZE.

(See Next Page.)

On the next page is a puzzle picture composed of 80 squares. If these squares be rearranged in a certain order they will form a real picture.

We offer a prize of £10 to the first person who sends the correct solution. In order to give readers in all parts of the United Kingdom as equal a chance as possible, the whole of the solutions received at 17, Henrietta Street in any one day will be considered together. In the very unlikely chance of two or more correct solutions being included in one day's post, the prize will be given to the sender of the *neatest* one. A Consolation Prize will be awarded to the sender of every correct solution who is not the winner of the £10.

If no correct solution be received on or before Tuesday, February 4th, 1896, the Ten-Pound Prize will be given to the sender of the solution then to hand which is most nearly correct.

Pictures should be packed flat or folded, not rolled, and the outside wrapper must be marked "January."

N.B.—To make the puzzle more difficult some of the squares have been turned upside down.

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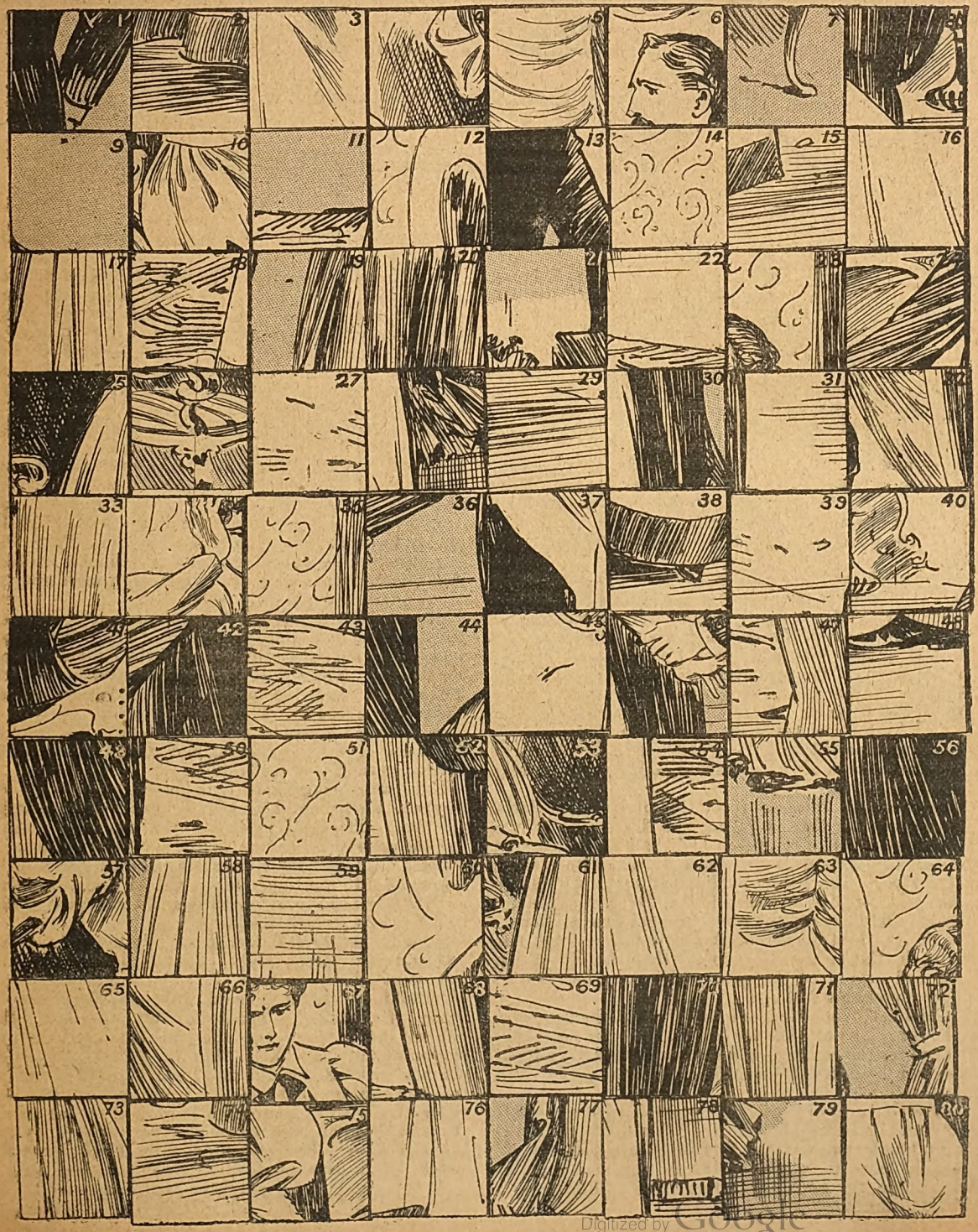
PUZZLE ✣ PICTURE.

(SEE OPPOSITE PAGE.)



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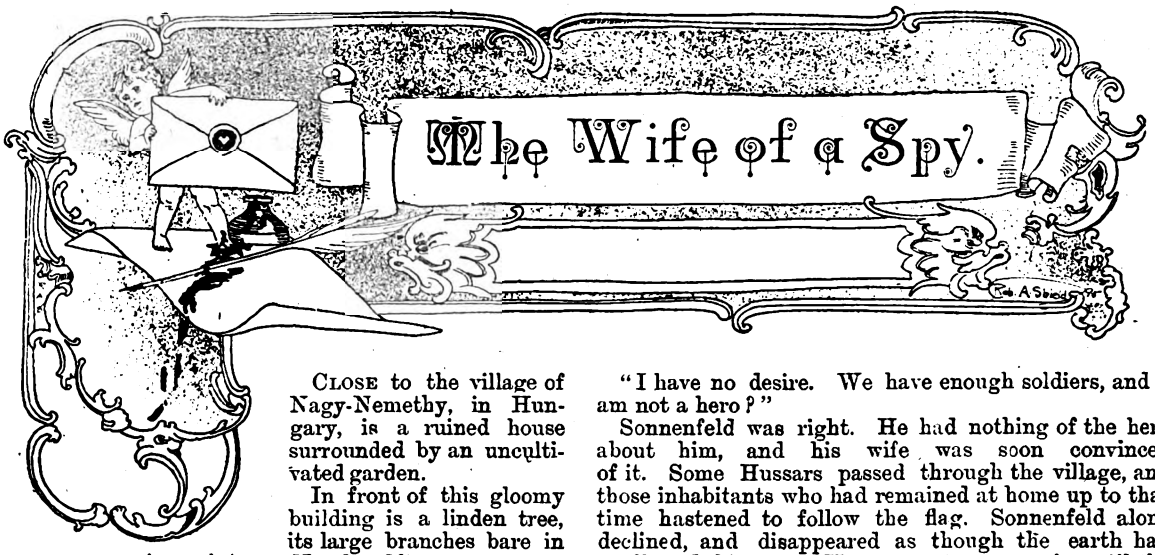

The Wife of a Spy.

CLOSE to the village of Nagy-Nemethy, in Hungary, is a ruined house surrounded by an uncultivated garden.

In front of this gloomy building is a linden tree, its large branches bare in summer as in winter. Nearly fifty years ago, when people awakened on all sides and began to shake off their chains, this house was inhabited by a young Jewish family, Adolph Sonnenfeld, a grain dealer, and his wife. While Sonnenfeld by his appearance bore no special resemblance to other members of his race, being blonde, rosy, and thin, like a German, Egla was a real Jewish woman, beautiful, intelligent, and calm, with dark, passionate eyes, small mouth, and disdainful lips.

Sonnenfeld and his wife loved each other tenderly. Egla even went so far as to love her husband more than her country, which is saying a good deal, for she was an exalted and ardent Hungarian patriot. She read the Magyar poetry with a feverish interest, and rejoiced in the growth of the revolution which was spreading in Hungary. Her favourite revolutionary heroes were Petoefi and Kossuth. Believing in a better future, she inculcated in her children an affection for their country and the passion of love and independence. Restricted to the narrow limits of her household, Egla led a rigorously feminine existence.

But when the February revolution broke out in Paris, soon followed by that of Vienna and the uprising of the Hungarians, her character, which had long surpassed the ordinary in its measure of energy, soon showed itself in full force. She began by interesting herself in the debates of the Diet, and then in the threatening conflict between the Government and the populace in Vienna, and in the first scenes of the civil war. When she learnt, in the month of October, that the Hungarian army had arrived at the gates of Vienna, she could no longer repress her feelings.

"Adolph!" she cried one morning at the breakfast table, throwing down the newspaper, "everyone is taking up arms for the country—old men, women, and children have not hesitated to sacrifice themselves. Do you intend to remain behind?"

"Are you crazy?" cried Sonnenfeld, with an indignant and almost frightened air. "What does the Hungarian liberty matter to me? I am a Jew, and, even if I should have an idea of going to war, people would laugh at me, for I don't even know how to load a gun."

"You can learn."

"I have no desire. We have enough soldiers, and I am not a hero?"

Sonnenfeld was right. He had nothing of the hero about him, and his wife was soon convinced of it. Some Hussars passed through the village, and those inhabitants who had remained at home up to that time hastened to follow the flag. Sonnenfeld alone declined, and disappeared as though the earth had swallowed him up. He was not seen again until the last soldier had quitted Nagy-Nemethy.

Egla then learnt that he had concealed himself in the cellar, where the cook carried him his food. She was filled with disgust. Her first impulse was to take her two children and leave this man, whom she could no longer love; but Sonnenfeld besought her so—he poured out so many tears, and his weeping children so well pleaded his cause—that Egla remained with him. From that day onwards she treated him with a disdainful coolness that affected him much more than reproaches and frequent quarrels would have done.

Shortly after this the first detachment of light horsemen arrived at Nagy-Nemethy. They were soon followed by a brigade which established its camp near the village. Some of the soldiers were billeted on the inhabitants, and the general selected Sonnenfeld's house for himself. The Jew surpassed himself in hospitality and servile demonstrations. He cringed like a dog before the general, and was, in consequence, treated as such by the officer.

Egla (who, being timid and hostile, kept out of the way) saw the general kick her husband out of the house one day. The sight made the blood rush to her face, but she concealed her trouble and suffered in silence.

Some days later the Hungarian Hussars exchanged a few shots with the Imperialists, and at night the Hungarians advanced from all sides and threatened to surround the Austrian brigade.

Egla dressed herself hurriedly. She noticed that her husband had crept slyly out of the house, and she went down to look for him. She soon saw him, talking with the general, who smiled graciously, while Sonnenfeld bowed humbly to him. She did not know why, but the general's smile caused her more anguish than the kicking he had given her husband. She could only hear isolated phrases of the conversation, but she soon understood that the general complained because he had found no one among the population disposed to act as a spy, not even among the poor Jews. She also heard Sonnenfeld assure the general of his devotion, then the two men separated.

At sunset the Imperialists had disappeared. An aide-de-camp had brought to the general orders to

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abandon this position and move towards the south with his brigade.

Throughout this winter campaign in Hungary each day brought contradictory news. Egla was agitated and sorrowful. She could not sleep at night.

Business was at a standstill. Sonnenfeld alone showed any activity, a fact which greatly worried his wife. He furnished provisions of all kinds for the Imperial troops. Suspicious-looking men often came to see him, and after each visit Sonnenfeld went away from the house for some time. Egla, with heavy heart, watched him with increasing mistrust.

One winter's day some Hussars, with their carbines loaded, suddenly appeared in the village. They were loudly acclaimed, and the joy increased when they were followed by a battalion of infantry. The Hungarians halted, threw out pickets in all directions, and began to prepare their dinner. The inhabitants generously gave up all they possessed to recompense the brave Hungarian soldiers for their fatigues and sufferings. Egla, not being able to follow this example without her husband's consent, began to look for him, as he had suddenly disappeared. After she had searched in vain about the house and neighbourhood, an evil suspicion began to force itself upon her.

At night, when all the inhabitants of Nagy-Nemethy were asleep, Egla remained awake. Seated upon her bed, she listened to the slightest noise. It seemed to her that something terrible was going to happen—something which she had felt coming for a long time. She remained thus for an hour or two; then, worn out, she fell asleep.

Suddenly she was awakened by musketry shots and a confused roar. Horses thundered by at a gallop, drums beat, and officers cried out their orders. The shots sounded closer; she opened her window, and a ball struck the wall beside her. She drew back quickly and extinguished the light.

The struggle went on in the streets. The Imperial troops had returned, and in the darkness had surprised and attacked the Hungarian infantry with superior forces. A very small number of Hungarians succeeded in escaping with their flag; the rest were killed or made prisoners.

Egla, her ideas all confused, remained seated in her chamber. An hour passed; then she heard voices in the neighbouring room. One was that of her husband; the other, clear, vibrating, and foreign, evidently accustomed to command, thanked Sonnenfeld, and promised him a handsome reward.

While the Imperial troops, and her husband with them, retired towards the east, Egla muffled up her children and hastened to her parents' house. Having placed her children in security, on the third day she returned home. Her husband was still absent. During the following night he crept into his house like a thief. He was greatly agitated when he saw his wife come out of her room with a light in her hand. She placed the light upon the table, sat down, and questioned her husband as coldly and severely as a judge on the bench.

"Where have you been?"

"I have made an important transaction. I have furnished lard and bread to the general."

"You have furnished him with something else. You have betrayed your brothers!" cried the Jewess, red with anger. "You are a spy!"

"What do you mean?" cried Sonnenfeld, turning pale.

"I heard your conversation with the general."

"Well, and what then?" he said, trying to smile.

The beautiful Jewess arose and looked at him steadily. "What then?" said she; "you are a traitor and deserve death. But I have loved you, and I do not want to see the name I still bear disgraced. I do not wish to have you die on the scaffold. You shall kill yourself here in this chamber!"

"You have lost your reason!" cried Sonnenfeld, in a shaking voice.

Egla calmly took out a pistol. "You must die!" she continued; "you are so degraded that I do not dare even to think of the frightful crime you have committed. If you are too cowardly to kill yourself I will execute you in the name of the country!"

She raised her pistol and aimed at the wretch's breast. He threw himself on his knees, and implored her pardon in agonising cries. The determined woman looked at him with irrepressible scorn; then she lowered her arm. "Yes, you are right; you are not even worth the powder."

Egla returned to her room and locked the door. When she felt sure that her husband was asleep, she threw a shawl over her head, and left the house.

The day had scarcely dawned when a number of cavalrymen appeared before Sonnenfeld's abode. The door was soon broken in, and some Hungarian Hussars, guided by Egla, went up to the chamber where the Jew was calmly sleeping.

"There is the spy!" she cried haughtily; "I want to see him hanged!"

Sonnenfeld still begged her to be merciful, but she remained inexorable. The Hussars bound his hands behind his back and led him out. With an imperturbable calm, his wife saw him hanged to a branch of the linden tree in front of his house. As soon as the execution was finished, she mounted a horse that the Hussars gave to her, and started off with them on the gallop.

At the attack on Waitzen a woman, carrying the Hungarian banner, led one of the infantry battalions. It was Egla, the valiant Jewess of Nagy-Nemethy. When the Poles of the Mazuchelli regiment carried the Komorn Hill at the point of the bayonet, it was Egla who encouraged them. Already struck with two balls, she fell, pierced by a bayonet stroke, on the tattered flag, and dyed it with her blood. N. N.

The Second Number of "PEARSON'S MAGAZINE" will be published on the First of February.

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That Beautiful Widow.

"Roasted quails, waiter, half-a-dozen oysters, and a bottle of your best Moselle—that will do, I think; and for dessert——"

"Yes, sir," quoth the attendant obsequiously.

"A few grapes and an ice cream. And, waiter!"

"Sir?"

"Don't forget plenty of olives."

"No, sir."

And the waiter whisked out of the room with the peculiar bustling movement that belongs to the genus, while Mr. Gustavus Lynmore quietly walked up to the bright anthracite fire, and stood stroking his moustache before the mantle mirror with a face expressive of the mildest contentment with himself and all the world besides. He was a tall, distinguished-looking man, with brilliant black eyes, hair like ripples of glossy jet, and a carefully preserved figure, and yet there was something in Mr. Lynmore's large Spanish orbs not altogether trustworthy.

"Upon my word," soliloquised Mr. Lynmore, eyeing himself complacently, "there's a good deal in—well, I won't say cheek, for it's a vulgar word—confidence is at once more elegant and more expressive. Now here I am, Gustavus Adolphus Lynmore, without ten pounds in my pocket, and without as much as that in any banking establishment, and yet I walk into the first hotel in the city, order the most expensive dinners, and insist on the most elegant rooms. And what's more I get 'em. As for the beggarly landlord wanting his bill, why, that's a future consideration. He ought to be willing to entertain a man of my style gratuitously; it gives a *je ne sais quoi* to the establishment, if the paltry-minded fellow only knew it. Hallo! here's a grey hair in my moustache! Gustavus Adolphus, it's time you were thinking of settling yourself. Bother grey hairs!"

Mr. Lynmore plucked out the offensive thread of silver, and strode up and down the room in some perturbation, pausing finally at the window, and looking abstractedly out upon the tide of life flowing on in the great thoroughfare below.

"By Jupiter; that's a pretty woman!"

He stopped short, transfixed by sudden admiration, as the afternoon sunshine, slanting in direct beams of murky gold into the second-storey window opposite, lighted up a bright head bending over some absorbing bit of fancy work.

"Much obliged to you, my friend, the sunshine," pondered Gustavus. "An opera-glass couldn't be better. Black dress, loops of black ribbon at the throat, fastened by a jet clasp. Aha! a young widow. And beautiful enough to drive a fellow distracted."

Beautiful she was, indeed, in the full light of that February sunset, with her glimmering golden hair, and the evanescent carnation of her round cheeks, and the royal poise of her slender, column-like throat. Gustavus Lynmore was a perfect critic of a woman—a man who had travelled all the world over, and looked at a beautiful face as dispassionately as he looked at a fine picture or a first-class statue—but even Gustavus was struck by the fair profile at the window.

"Never saw a lovelier set of features in my life," mused Lynmore, with something like an enthusiastic throb at the withered portion of anatomy that he called, by courtesy, his heart. "Upon my word, that woman wouldn't discredit the name of Mrs. Lynmore. Wonder if she's rich? She must be, though, to live in the parlour floor of the Celandine Hotel. Women can't play the confidence game as men do; they're obliged to have some sort of a base to start from.

"Oh, she must be rich; there can't be a shadow of doubt about it—rich and pretty, and a widow. Gustavus, my boy, you must see about this business, there's undoubtedly an opportunity for you. Hallo! a tow-headed little boy, as sure as I'm a living sinner, with his head on the pretty crape shoulder! Confound all incumbrances, say I. But then, perhaps it wouldn't make so much difference if there was plenty of cash in the locker. I really must take this matter into consideration. What's that, waiter? Dinner? Very well, let it be served at once. Do you hear?"

Mr. Lynmore sat down with an appetite that was enhanced by an occasional glimpse of the golden head and rosy cheeks at the window across the street.

"There, she sees me," he pondered. "She sees me, for I saw her smile behind those lovely ringlets, and now she has vanished from the casement. Hallo, waiter!"

The waiter paused from his task of clearing the table.

"Sir?"

"The fourth window on the left-hand side, parlour floor at the Celandine—I've an idea it would be a very nice room to have, in case I leave this hotel."

"Yes, sir," said the waiter, coughing doubtfully behind his hand, and secretly hoping that so very stylish a gentleman would remain at the St. Aubrey.

"I suppose you can tell me the number of the room?"

"Certainly, sir. I used to be hall-boy at the Celandine,

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sir, afore I came here. Fourth window on the left-hand side, sir, parlour floor? why, it's twenty-nine."

"Twenty-nine, eh? Thank you, waiter, I'm very much obliged to you."

And the waiter withdrew, feeling as grateful to Mr. Gustavus Lynmore as if that gentleman had tossed a shilling at him, instead of a few gracious words. Such is the effect of manner in this world.

Half an hour or so afterwards, Mr. Lynmore strolled accidentally into a fashionable florist's establishment where heliotrope and azaleas gave a tropic glow to the colourless plate-glass.

"Jansen, I want a very choice bouquet."

"Certainly, Mr. Lynmore. What style?"

"Well, plenty of white flowers—you know how to express that sort of thing—humble devotion and unobtrusive admiration."

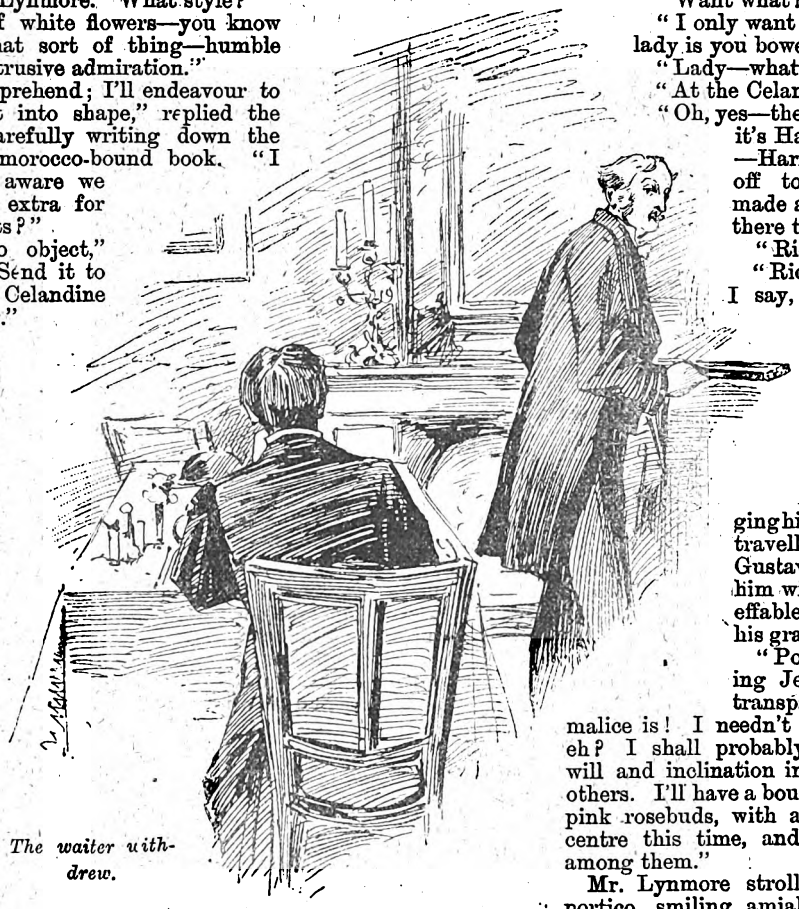
"Yes, sir, I comprehend; I'll endeavour to put the sentiment into shape," replied the æsthetic florist, carefully writing down the order in a red morocco-bound book. "I suppose you are aware we charge something extra for these ideal bouquets?"

"Expense is no object," said Lynmore. "Send it to Room number 29, Celandine Hotel, this evening."

"Mr. Lynmore, if I might venture to remind you of the little bill you left unliquidated here a year ago——"

"Bill? Oh, yes—how could I be so careless! I'll certainly attend to it immediately. Jansen; much obliged to you for reminding me of it."

The next morning Mr. Lynmore had the gratification of seeing his "ideal bouquet" in a Parisian vase between the lace draperies in the fourth window on the left side, and, moreover, of beholding the pretty widow's Grecian nose occasionally dipping daintily among the fragrant blossoms, with the bright hair falling around like a mist of gold.



The waiter withdrew.

"I must find out who she is," thought Gustavus. "She knows the bouquet was from here, for I caught her shy half-arch glance, just this minute—the very glance to shoot from a widow's cerulean eyes. But the question is, how to do it? I can't go over to the Celandine, because I boarded there six weeks last year, and came away without paying my bill."

Thus mused Mr. Gustavus Adolphus Lynmore, as he smoked his Havana by the sunshiny window of his exquisitely comfortable little private parlour.

"As I live," thought Gustavus, elevating his eyebrows, "there's Jenkisson rushing across the street like a racehorse. Now I never run; if there's anything plebeian it's haste; but Jenkisson always was eccentric. He's coming here; eh, what? lifting his hat to the divinity at the Celandine. He knows her!"

And Gustavus Lynmore, forgetting his recent sweeping condemnation of haste, ran downstairs, and clapped his old acquaintance cordially on the shoulder.

"Jenkisson, old fellow, what brings you here?"

"How d'ye do, Lynmore? Excuse me, but I'm in a hurry. Steamer sails at twelve, and it's after eleven now. Is that baggage ready, Mike?"

"Yes; but hold on just a minute. I want——"

"Want what?"

"I only want to know who that lady is you bowed to just now."

"Lady—what lady?"

"At the Celandine Hotel."

"Oh, yes—the Celandine. Why, it's Harry Burke's widow—Harry Burke that went off to California, and made a fortune, and died there two years ago."

"Rich, eh?"

"Rich as Crœsus. But I say, Gus, you needn't go making eyes at her: it's no use, for—carriage ready, eh? Well, good-bye, Gus."

So saying, Mr. Jenkisson precipitated himself into the vehicle, dragging his portmanteau and travelling rug after him, Gustavus looking after him with a smile of ineffable contempt curling his graceful lip.

"Poor, dear, blundering Jenkisson, how very transparent your shallow malice is! I needn't make eyes at her, eh? I shall probably follow my own will and inclination in this matter as in others. I'll have a bouquet all white and pink rosebuds, with a japonica in the centre this time, and slip my card in among them."

Mr. Lynmore strolled out upon the portico, smiling amiably the while, to reconnoitre the passers-by and display his unexceptionable costume.

"What a very nice little boy!" said Gustavus, stooping to pick up the hoop-stick that had rolled close to the step, and restoring it with a caress. "What's your name?"

"Harry Burke," lisped the tow-headed boy, looking very shyly at the affable stranger.

"Harry, eh? A very pretty name," pursued Gustavus, patting the tow-head. "And doesn't Harry want to go and take a walk with me?"

"No."

"Not if we go to a sweet-shop, and afterwards to a toy-shop?"

Harry Burke's seven-year-old integrity was not proof

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against such glittering temptations as these; he succumbed at once, and trotted off, hand-in-hand with the enticing stranger.

"A good move," thought Gustavus. "Mothers are such fools, you can reach 'em through their children without the least difficulty. I know one thing, though, I'll pack the little nuisance off to a boarding-school the first thing after we're married."

Master Harry, all unconscious of the dreadful fate awaiting him, went home to his mamma, in a high state of stickiness from various sweets, and loaded down with toys, and directly afterwards a bouquet of rosebuds arrived, containing one of Mr. Lynmore's aristocratically-engraved cards.

"Dear me, how polite!" said the lovely widow. "But, then, darling Harry wins all hearts."

Darling Harry, forsooth!

The next day Harry went to the park, and a new volume of poems in tinted paper and creamy Turkey binding was sent to Harry's mamma; the next day a pearl ring was intrusted to the youth for his mother; the next a pony was hired for Harry to ride, and that evening a diamond of the purest water, set in a narrow hoop of gold, was sent up to room No. 29, with Mr. Lynmore's compliments. Nor did the lovely widow spurn these gifts.

"That settles the matter," quoth Gustavus Adolphus decidedly. "To-morrow I'll take Harry to the menagerie, and in the evening I'll call, landlord or no landlord, and declare my sentiments. We have read each other's eyes long ago."

Harry was quite willing to be taken to the abode of savage beasts and wild birds.

"Mamma is very glad to have me go," said the artless youth. "She's engaged with company."

"Ah, indeed," said Gustavus, wincing a little, as the capering lad trod ever and anon upon his most sensitive corn, and mentally exclaiming: "You'll be packed off to a boarding-school, or I'll know the reason why!"

Mr. Lynmore endured the zoological exhibition with the utmost calmness and philosophy, and when the last serpent was safely coiled up in his iron cage, went home with the rejoicing Harry.

"For I really must wind this thing up," soliloquised Gustavus. "I've run entirely out of cash, and, what's more, I'm head and ears in debt for the bouquets and rings, and all these incidental expenses, including the brat. My darling," he said, aloud, in a honeyed voice, "will you ask your mamma if she will please favour me with a brief interview?"

Five minutes passed away—five nervous interminable minutes—while Mr. Lynmore sat in mortal dread of the landlord of the Celandine Hotel, and apprehension as to what reception might be accorded to his message. Presently, however, Master Harry came jumping down, two steps at a time.

"Mamma says, will you please to come up."

Mr. Lynmore promptly followed his small guide up the stairs, his heart thumping behind his waistcoat.

"Here he is, mamma!" bawled the boy, flinging the door wide open.

There stood the golden-haired beauty in a lustrous dress of richest white silk, with diamonds circling her throat like a tiny line of light, and flashing on her blue-veined wrists, and there, moreover, stood a tall, dashing-looking gentleman, in white gloves and a white waistcoat. Gustavus Adolphus stood rooted to the floor.

"I am so glad to meet you, Mr. Lynmore," lisped the lady, advancing, "and to introduce you to Mr. Wyndham, my husband."

"Your—husband!"

"Yes; we were married this morning; and I was so much obliged to you for taking Harry out of the way. You see, children are objectionable at such a time."

Gustavus opened his lips and shut them spasmodically, without uttering a word.

"And," went on the blue-eyed divinity, with merciless sweetness, "I have laid aside every one of your elegant presents for dear little Harry until he is old enough to appreciate them. We are going to take the sweet child to the Continent with us to-morrow, but I'm sure he'll never forget his kind friend."

Mr. Lynmore bowed mechanically, and got out of the room, he never knew exactly how. One thing connected with his retreat, however, he had disagreeable occasion to remember.

"That little bill of mine, you'll recollect, Mr. Lynmore," said a husky voice close to his ear. "If it's convenient to settle——"

"But it isn't convenient" groaned Lynmore, with a bitter recollection of the diamond ring and the hot-house flowers.

"Oh, very well. Here, Jennings?"

And Mr. Lynmore, the cosmopolitan, found himself arrested on the charge of attempting to defraud the landlord of the Celandine Hotel out of the paltry sum of £40.

So ended his courtship, and so ended, at least for the time being, his dreams of "marrying rich."

RICHARD SIBERT.

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The Story of a Shameful Crime.

CHAPTER XVII.

"EUREKA!"

THE two boys had regarded Burgoyne's manifest excitement and agitation with awed perturbation. They shrank back, vaguely startled, as, after that fruitless inspection of the book cover, he fixed his eyes, snapping, eager and questioning, upon them.

"Where did you get this?" he demanded.

"Found it," blurted out one of the lads.

"Where?"

"Over yonder."

As he spoke the urchin indicated a spot relatively near to the school-house.

"Where I cast it away, or thereabouts!" murmured Burgoyne. "It must have lain there until——When did you find it?" he queried, aloud.

"Just a bit ago."

"You—you did not notice anything by the side of it, or near it?"

"What, sir?"

"A piece of paper—a folded strip?"

The boy shook his head dissentingly.

"Yes, we did find something," interpolated the other lad.

"Ah!" ejaculated Burgoyne eagerly.

"Inside of it."

"Yes, yes! go on," directed Burgoyne, quivering with anxiety.

"Just as you say, sir—a piece of paper, folded."

"It is the key!" breathed Burgoyne tumultuously. "Speak, boy! Where was it?"

"In a little pocket at the back of the cover, sir."

"It is what I am looking for," announced Burgoyne, scarcely able to control his eagerness.

"It was a piece of stiff white writing paper, and we used it for a messenger."

"To the kite?"

"Yes, sir. See! If you look sharp you can see it right up against the kite."

Adrian Burgoyne thrilled at the disclosure. He had traced the precious cipher alphabet, but how strangely! Accidentally the boys had stumbled over it. In lieu of other material, they had used it to enhance their sport of kite-flying.

He trembled as he reflected that, in setting it on the string, they might have mutilated it. He shielded his eyes from the sun, and gazed aloft. The kite was "nearly out of sight," to employ a juvenile term, and only a slight variation in shadow at its far-distant centre indicated the presence of some foreign object there—"the messenger!"

To think of it! Aloft a thousand feet or more, the sport of varying breezes, the key to a clear million in hard cash was tantalisingly in sight, but out of immediate reach. The peculiar communication unnerved Burgoyne seriously. He hurried to where the other boys were gathered. He amazed the owner of the kite by seizing the string.

The stiff breeze drew the cord taut as a straining ship's cable. In his eagerness and excitement Burgoyne began to pull it in.

"Hold on! don't do that, mister!" spoke the owner of the kite.

"But you've sent up as a messenger a paper belonging to me," explained Burgoyne, "and I want it at once!"

"Yes, sir, that's all right; only, if you don't pull in gently, you'll snap the string, and——"

"Broke loose!" interrupted an excited voice.

The very catastrophe the lad had predicted took place at just that moment.

Twang! The cord gave an ominous snap; the parted strands flitted away like the wings of a fleet bird. In dismay, Burgoyne contemplated the results of his rashness.

"Catch it! get the kite, the messenger. I'll give a handful of money to the boy who finds it first!"

The boys started away at full speed. As to Burgoyne, unused to scientific pirouettes and swift divings of the sky-sailer, he only gazed blankly at it as it bore away to the west, and disappeared over the edge of the forest.

The boys had plunged into the timber. As the school-bell rang they reappeared one by one.

"Got to get to school, mister," vouchsafed the owner of the kite. "If you can wait until after, we'll make another search for it. There was lots of string out, you see, and it's gone a long way."

Burgoyne set about tracing the missing kite himself. He penetrated the forest, he anxiously inspected the tree tops.

His heart took vivid hope as he came across a dangling string. Following this with his eyes as it ran from tree to tree, he finally came to a giant elm. Among its highest branches the white face of the kite showed. He had found it at last.

An expert climber, he soon had it out of its aerial perch. His eyes dilated with suspense as he sat down on the ground and drew it towards him.

Yes, there was "the messenger," a folded piece of worn writing paper. A small hole penetrated its centre. He

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removed it from the string. With trembling fingers he opened it.

"Eureka!"

One spontaneous cry broke from his lips. Into his anxious face sprang the glow of hope and triumph supreme.

The characters were intact; they were identical with those contained in the original parchment message, and with the transcription tattooed in india ink on his fore-arm.

He clasped the little fragment of paper in his hand as if it was a jewel, a pearl of value inestimable.

He had torn a strip from the newspaper front of the kite, and folded the alphabet key in it.

Pressing hurriedly forward, Adrian Burgoyne sought some sheltered, secluded spot, where, unobserved, uninterrupted, he might study out the mystic cipher—translate the signs that held hidden the secret of the hiding-place of dead Ralph Ringold's fortune.

At last, after a swift, desultory walk, he paused. He had come to an overgrown garden, and he crawled through a break in its high picket fence.

"Ah!" he ejaculated, looking round him, with a queer start. "Singular; but this is the same spot where I slept the night after I first saw Patrice."

Singular? Yes, fateful, too. It was destiny that had guided his erratic steps hither, although at that moment Adrian Burgoyne little dreamt it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DEAD TO THE WORLD.

AT last!

Adrian Burgoyne drew a long, fervent sigh of relief and satisfaction combined, and lifted his eyes from the engrossing labour of hours.

Noon had come and gone, the sun was swinging far in the west, and yet he had pored over the scrawl in his hand, and compared it with the tattoo chronicle on his arm until every character was as familiar to him as an English letter, until he had translated coherently, unmistakably, the message that bore the dying secret of his friend, Ralph Rignold.

There could be no question as to the directions the message contained, but as Burgoyne traced their true import he realised that he was just entering a new realm of mysticism and adventure.

Translated, the cipher message read:

"In the old monastery of San Miguel, near Guayli, Mexico, lives a sect of priests of the old *régime*. They are under close governmental favour, which has vested in them full legal claim to the old church, the monastery, and surrounding territory.

"Near the monastery is the cave of Bureldo. Here are stored idols, relics, and antiquities of the ancient Aztecs. A wild, half-savage tribe, claiming to be direct descendants of Montezuma, dwell in the cliffs surrounding it, and guard the cave as holy ground, day and night.

"Although at religious variance, the priests and the Aztec devotees are friends, the former possessing an official domination over the fanatics.

"In this cave, two years since, I hid for a week, to escape the rigours of a provincial insurrection. My treasure, secured from the mountains, I had brought with me. Harassed by my enemies outside, fearful of discovery by the fanatics, I secreted this treasure, and managed to escape unseen.

"If anything should happen to me, my friends and the friends of my darling child, Patrice, must obtain this treasure. It will be difficult to secure entrance to the cave, so rigidly guarded, so frequently visited by the devotees. This must be done by strategy or force.

"Once accomplished, look for the idol known as The White God. It is a stone image, and is placed in a niche far back in the caves. It is known to the Aztec fanatics as the oldest idol in America.

"Within this hollowed-out block of stone I hid my treasure, and sealed it up with the natural cement the rocks of the cave afford. Break it, or dig out the cement, purchase or carry away the idol, but there is the fortune that will make my orphan daughter heiress to a million."

"The secret out!—the clue revealed at last!" breathed Adrian Burgoyne fervidly, as he completed the translation of the message. "My course is plain as to the treasure. It has escaped the knowledge of my enemies. I alone know where it is hidden. Mexico—the cave of Bureldo—the White God—the treasure—wealth for the woman I love. But what of Patrice?—where is Patrice?"

He sank his head into his hands and reflected. Soul and mind immersed in profoundest meditation, Adrian Burgoyne faced the solution of the problem of safety, happiness, security for the future.

That future spread before him in positive outline. He had a work to do, and that labour was clearly defined.

After almost incredible trouble, after rigorous hardship, torture, imprisonment, the menace of death itself, he found himself the possessor of a secret involving the possession of a fortune rivalling the ransom of a king, the dowry of a princess.

It belonged where his heart belonged—to Patrice Ringold. For her it should be secured, and it would be a welcome, self-sacrificial task to endow her with its possession. Once she was placed beyond the reach of want and poverty, vested with her legal rights, safe from the power of her enemies, would her true, womanly heart speak? Would she say: "Friend, beloved, you have worked out a noble duty; together we will share its reward?"

Then, to forget the past; to hasten to some distant clime, safe from the dread of the plots of enemies.

No! A grim, set resolve showed in the thinker's face, as he realised that not until he had unmasked Richard Sheldon and his evil-souled emissary, Colonel Lytle; not until the long score of blight, suffering, and torture he owed these two inhuman fiends was wiped out in atonement; not until they had paid that tragic debt, woe for woe, torture for torture, heart-break for heart-break, and he, Adrian Burgoyne, had been vindicated, rehabilitated, an honest, innocent victim, in the eyes of his fellow-men, would he be content.

That firm, holy resolve strengthened mind and soul to steady, tireless endeavour. He formulated his plans for the immediate future. First, a quest for Patrice—then, the treasure.

They believed him dead; those cruel enemies of his, the watch-dogs of the law, were off their guard. In his changed identity he could boldly penetrate the open streets and the police-patrolled by-ways of the city alike in safety.

A quaint conceit came to Adrian Burgoyne's mind as he sat beneath the shadow of the high bushes and reflected. He felt that with the hour a new destiny had begun; that, fully armed and equipped, he was about to start out upon a new career, like some valiant knight-errant bent on championing the cause of a fair, faithful lady-love.

He must adopt a new name—anyone would do, but he must sink all trace of Adrian Burgoyne. *He* was dead. Would he ever be able to write "Redivivus" above his memory? Nay. Not until the long case was ended, villainy unmasked, and innocence surely vindicated and triumphant.

From a rubbish heap of leaves, dead vines, and the trimmings of numberless rose-bushes near at hand, he drew a piece of smooth thin wood that lay there, and its new surface attracted him. With a peculiar smile he cut it to a rounding edge.

Then with his knife he dug a little trench at his side. From a pocket he next drew a small brass object. It was a metal tag, the last memento he possessed of his dreary prison career. It bore the number 407.

He placed it in the trench. Over it he heaped the dirt, until it formed a miniature grave-mound; then, with a

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pencil, he traced over the smooth surface of the impromptu tombstone the words:

"Sacred to the memory of Convict 407, Adrian Burgoyne. Died——," and the date followed. "Murdered by the law! Resurgam!"

Yes, he should rise again, indeed, far above the calumnies of his enemies, far beyond their power of harm or influence!

He placed the erratic chronicle at the head of the little grave. He draped it fancifully with the ends of a delicate vine that grew in profusion about the spot. Then the interment was over. He had buried himself and the past in one common grave. Convict 407 was dead, with all his woes, sufferings, and wrongs. Rest in peace! Hail the new man, strong, resolute, daring to avenge his memory in that far day when he should stand face to face with his murderers!

The conceit pleased him. He rose and left the spot, crept through the fence, and gained the cliffs overlooking the town.

Fateful hour! Criminating chronicle of the mock grave! Had he ever dreamed what familiar eyes would one day view that fanciful legend in black, he would have rended to atoms the wooden tombstone, as if its existence was sinister as the breath of a pestilence!

Hail the new life! new energies, new ambitions, new motives! Buoyant, hopeful, bent on tracing his missing love, Adrian Burgoyne selected a narrow path, and went down towards the village.

Went down to mingle once more with his fellow-creatures—went down, though he knew it not, to meet as strange, as stormy, as tragic a fate as was ever meted out to mortal man!

CHAPTER XIX.

AT HIS GATES.

"NOT a trace; not a clue! What does it mean?"

Adrian Burgoyne asked himself the question in somewhat vague bewilderment and alarm.

Five days had passed since he had left the vicinity of Lynde, and it was just the evening previous that he had once more ventured to set foot in the streets of the city where he had met his fate, and had been conquered by it in the years agone.

What little money he had left of his scanty stock was almost all expended in giving the finishing touches to a toilet in accordance with his plans of disguise.

He now resembled in attire and mien a gentleman in struggling circumstances, a village doctor, a man not yet passed the verge of well-doing in the way of business, his natural dignity of manner and expressive eyes indicating an intelligence and breeding beyond the average of the ordinary person.

From early dusk until noon of the ensuing day at intervals he had watched the home of Richard Sheldon.

So far without success, however. The house seemed to have few occupants. He had caught sight of two maid servants, and of the ostler in the stable, but all the evening previous he had watched in vain for any sign of a light in the library and drawing-rooms of the house, and all that morning he had lingered in the vicinity uselessly, for no Richard Sheldon came down the polished marble steps to go to his business office, no Colonel Lytle drove up to call upon his friend and familiar in villainy.

"I cannot make it out," cogitated Burgoyne. "I shall have to begin a cautious and systematic series of inquiries."

He strolled through the court at the rear of Sheldon's residence, and observed the man of the stables more closely. If he meditated engaging him in a conversation concerning his employer and his probable whereabouts, Burgoyne dismissed the project from his mind at a second glance at him. That surly face and irritable manner proved the ostler to be no chatterer, and Burgoyne left the vicinity with a new and cautious plan outlined in his mind.

An hour later he reappeared. He bore in his hand a small leather handbag. It contained half-a-dozen bottles of some patent preparation for polishing furniture and the like, purchased cheaply. His plan was to canvass the immediate neighbourhood, ostensibly as a pedlar, and, while descanting on his wares, engage the servant who answered his call in conversation, tending to a discussion on the recent movements of Richard Sheldon.

A hint—a mere suggestion concerning the appearance of a strange young lady at Sheldon's house of late—a mere mention of some trivial fact thus gleaned—might be the starting clue to important and speedy disclosures. Adrian Burgoyne was detective enough to comprehend that.

He started in at the end of the square, going to the area doors of the houses at which he called, and meeting with the varied chary welcome and gruff incivility of repulse usually awarded the canvasser. He had just turned from a house bearing a doctor's sign, and was coming up the area steps, when he ran almost plump against a man hastening precipitately to the very door he had just left.

"Excuse me, sir!" gasped out the man. "Do you know—Oh! sir, are you the doctor?"

Evidently his acquaintance with the physician he sought was decidedly limited, his words bespoke that. His last palpitating query, too, revealed the fact that Burgoyne's dignified manner and the little hand-bag he carried gave him quite a professional appearance, and the fact that he was just leaving the doctor's explained the excited caller's mistake in crediting him with being a physician.

"No. The doctor——"

There Adrian Burgoyne paused, for a second glance at the man caused a variety of exciting suggestions to flash through his quick mind. In a moment he recognised the other. It was Sheldon's ostler.

Some startling occurrence at that domicile had evidently started him on a speedy and excited mission, for he was scarcely coherent, so agitated was he.

Eagerly seizing Burgoyne's arm, he pleaded earnestly.

"Not the doctor? Perhaps his assistant, then? Oh, sir! I see you have your medicine case with you. It's a case of life and death. Every moment may be fatal. Please come doctor, if only for a minute. It's only a step or two."

Adrian Burgoyne was borne perforce out into the street and down the walk by his wilful companion. The latter began pouring his tale of woe into his ears, volubly and distractedly, and ere Burgoyne found an opportunity to disclaim the professional character attributed to him, he was fairly at Sheldon's door.

He thrilled to vague augury and hesitation as he realised what a strange combination of circumstances was doing for him—ushering him across the threshold of the very house whose mysteries he had so craved to explore. Should he falter or draw back? No. Confident in his disguise, certain that his visit was the initial step to possibly important discoveries, he remained mute. The ostler had insisted upon accepting him as a duly accredited physician. Well, be it so!

"What is the matter—what has happened?" asked Burgoyne, as the man ushered him into the reception room.

"The serving maid, sir. You see, it's all my fault, but she would tipple. I had a bottle of embrocation for rubbing my horses, and I happened to leave it in a little cupboard in the laundry; she found it, thought it was liquor, and—oh! if it kills her will they hang me?"

"I fancy not; we must try and give her an antidote," said Burgoyne. "Have you notified your employer?" he questioned deftly.

"Mr. Sheldon? Oh, no, sir. He ain't here—won't be here to-day, lucky for me! for I'm sure he'd discharge me for my carelessness, he hates fuss so. Get her well, doctor,

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so he don't hear of it, and I'll pay you half my month's wages—anything, so she don't die, and me get the blame of it!"

A gratified expression came into Adrian Burgoyne's eyes. The agitation of the household of servants, and the absence of the master, promised well for a free field and the exercise to its fullest extent of the influence his supposed professional status gave him, in a plan to learn much that he wanted to know ere he again left the house.

The ostler led the way to a little room on the main floor. Here a woman-servant was wailing and frantically wringing her hands, while groaning in pain, tossing and frightened, was the white-faced victim of the poisoning.

Adrian Burgoyne had spent one year of his sojourn behind prison bars in the hospital of the gaol, as aid to the physician in charge, and that brief training in the healing art stood him in good stead now.

He gravely felt the pulse of the sufferer, who declared that her stomach was burning up, her throat scorched to a cinder, and her lungs ablaze. At a glance he discerned that she was more frightened than hurt, but he did not say so.

He examined, smelt, and tasted the contents of the bottle from which she had drunk. It was an ordinary horse embrocation, composed of liquids far more likely to produce nausea than active poisoning, and he knew that a drastic emetic would soon relieve the woman.

"I have no medicine with me that exactly meets this case," he announced to the frightened ostler, who hung upon his words as if they comprised the stored-up wisdom of an expert. "Go to the nearest chemist's and get this put up. You need not be alarmed; I can save the patient."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, doctor!" whimpered the unnerved oster gratefully.

"Only—I will have to watch the case for any possible recurrence of unfavourable symptoms later on, so as to be on hand to check the same."

The big words settled the conviction in the ostler's mind that luck had sent a second Mackenzie to his rescue at a critical moment, and he sped away, a relieved look on his face, to secure the emetic Burgoyne had ordered—a remedy so simple that the latter knew any druggist would prepare it, even on an unsigned and unofficial pencilled order.

The ostler was not long in returning. A glance at the patient, after the administering of the medicine, convinced Burgoyne that she was relieved, and out of all possible danger. He ordered libations of warm milk and perfect quiet, and announced to the ostler that he would remain for a little time, to see that she got on all right.

"Yes, sir. This way, doctor," spoke the man, servile and awed in the presence of such rare medical skill. "You will find it very comfortable in the library here."

He led the way into Richard Sheldon's favourite lounging-room as he spoke, and wheeled the easiest of all easy-chairs into position for his guest.

Adrian Burgoyne's eyes swept the room keenly. They found a rare object of interest in the magnificent writing-desk at his hand.

"Here are books and papers, sir," spoke the ostler, wheeling a little stand to where Burgoyne sat, but the latter waved a detaining hand.

"I would prefer to do a little writing. If you would not object, might I use the desk?"

"Certainly, sir—oh, most assuredly, doctor," exclaimed the voluble ostler, anxious to oblige his visitor, and hoping his accommodating ways and respectful words would pass current for coin in settling the doctor's final bill for services now that he was recovering from his fright.

He found a bunch of keys and unlocked the desk. He threw back the flexible top, and then, saying he would watch the invalid for half an hour and then report progress to the doctor, he left Burgoyne to himself.

"What fortune!"

His eager gaze sweeping the open desk before him, Adrian Burgoyne uttered the words.

What fortune, indeed! Half an hour alone with those pigeon-holes, and drawers, and portfolios, crammed full of the private documents of the man who held his fate and that of Patrice Ringold within his cruel power!

He thrilled as he realised how circumstances had aided a consummation never dreamt of in his wildest fancies.

He scribbled a few words on a blank tablet so as to feign a semblance of writing. He kept one ear bent towards the door, to be warned of an abrupt approach of the ostler, who had unwittingly placed his master's most cherished secrets at the mercy of a resolute enemy.

Then Adrian Burgoyne delved into the mass of papers before him. He scanned books of accounts, he conned pages of correspondence. He began his task curiously, eagerly. As it proceeded, his face grew grave, startled, serious, and finally, as accumulating surprises terminated in one last discovery that completely electrified him, he sprang to his feet with a wild, incredulous cry, his face a void of doubt, astonishment, and alarm.

"Impossible!" he gasped, staring blankly at three crumpled pieces of paper in his hand, selected from the mass before him. "Impossible!—incredible!"

Footsteps sounded at the door. Lost in a maze of overwhelming emotion, Adrian Burgoyne had just wit enough to thrust the papers in his hand into his pocket, and control his agitation in a slight degree, as the ostler appeared.

The face of the latter was jubilant.

"Oh, doctor!" he exclaimed, "how can we thank you? She's better, she's well, she's at work again, lively as ever."

"Yes? I am glad—I—I had better go," stammered Burgoyne incoherently, walking to the door like a man in a dream.

The ostler stared curiously at him. A queer-acting creature, this doctor he decided.

"And your bill, doctor?" he inquired deprecatingly, as he opened the massive front door.

"Nothing," choked out Burgoyne, and was down the steps with the celerity of a man fleeing from pestilence.

He hurried along the street, looking neither to the right nor to the left. His eyes were haunted with a new dread, his face was troubled, amazed, alarmed.

He never paused until he had reached a room in the attic of a broken-down house where he had engaged lodgings the day previous.

Once there, he sank down into the one rickety chair it contained. In a state of utter collapse, he stared vaguely, dreamily, out at the little window through which the garish light of day entered charily.

Mechanically he drew the documents from his pocket that he had surreptitiously secured from Richard Sheldon's writing-desk.

"Impossible!" he muttered, gasping at them with a hopeless, despairing eye—"incredible!"

(To be continued.)

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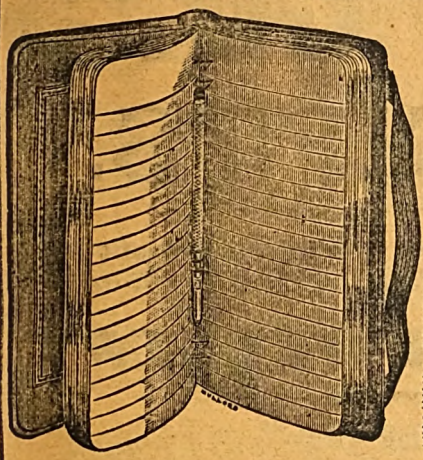

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Short Stories

LOVE WAR ADVENTURE ROMANCE PATHOS HUMOUR

No. 370.] For the Week ending February 1st, 1896. [One Penny.

The Secret of the Crypt.

IN the midst of a wide tract of uncultivated land in southern California stands a ruined adobe house, once the patriarchal home of the Miramontes. One hundred years ago the valley, now dry and barren, was watered by streams flowing through aqueducts, clear and cool from the mountains, and great herds of cattle and flocks of sheep grazed on the luscious herbage. Where still stands some scraggy olive trees once grew a thrifty orchard, but not even a fallen trunk remains of the noble grove of live oaks in whose shade Don Federico Miramonte, the first owner of this vast estate, built a little chapel whose crumbling adobe walls sank into shapeless mounds of earth long ago.

At a little distance from the great house lived the labourers and servants, in primitive dwellings made of tules—reeds—brought from the marshes. The dimensions of Don Federico's estate were defined by an impregnable boundary line—a hedge of prickly cacti, planted to prevent the invasions of hostile Indians from the mountains. In some places the cacti have grown to an enormous height, flourishing in the midst of drought and desolation, while the people they were planted to protect and the Indians who were their foes have vanished from the earth.

One morning, in October, 1891, two young men rode towards the old adobe and stopped to rest in its shadow. One—dark-browed and sallow-skinned, with eyes like black beads—was Arturo Miramonte, Don Federico's only living descendant. The other was a young architect from England named Severson.

Evidently the scene was new to him, for, while the Spaniard sat on his horse and smoked his cigarettes in moody silence, looking neither to right nor left, the Englishman's eager eyes took in every detail of their surroundings. Twice he was about to speak, but the sight of his friend's melancholy countenance kept him silent; he knew Miramonte well enough to understand that he did not wish to be disturbed.

"Aye!" said the Spaniard at last. "*Valgame Dios!* It is a dreary scene! You see, my friend, all that remains!" He spoke slowly, choosing his words with care. Arturo Miramonte detested the language. "You can form no idea of the grandness that was once here. An avenue of palms led up to the house (they were cut down by the Americans), and the placita—the court there, señor, where you see the ruins of a fountain—was planted with flowers and tropical trees. Don Federico's servants made a village of themselves! At night, they say, when the moon shone, he would sit with his young wife under the arched porch yonder and watch the people dancing to the music of guitars and castanets. But his wife ran away with an Englishman, and Don Federico became suddenly an old man, and so morose that all his people feared him. You have heard the story?"

"No," answered Severson. "Let's go inside while you tell it."

"My great-grandfather's wife was very beautiful," continued Miramonte, as they walked across the neglected court, "not beautiful like our Spanish women, but with shining red hair and a white skin and soft brown eyes. He brought her with him when he came to this country, and no one knows the land of her nativity.

"He built this house for her and filled it with beautiful things—carpets from Persia (Don Federico had been a great traveller) and pictures and curtains and furniture from everywhere. He worshipped her instead of the Virgin. There was nothing he would not do for her. They were famous for their hospitality—you have heard of the hospitality of the Miramontes?—*si?*—and travellers never asked shelter there in vain.

"But one day Don Federico found his wife in the arms of an Englishman, who was their guest. Why he did not kill them both I do not understand. The servant heard her screams and prayers for mercy. That night the faithless woman disappeared with her lover, and Don Federico made no search for them. He forbade the mention of her name. He became a recluse, a cynic, a miser, and for thirty years he lived alone, ruling his people like a king, hoarding his money and growing richer every year. And then, as suddenly as

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he had retired from the world he entered it again. It was his purpose to marry, to provide heirs to his wealth——"

"But—the wife?" interrupted Severson.

Miramonte rolled another cigarette. "She disappeared with her lover," he repeated, "the night after her perfidy was discovered, and they were never heard of again. Don Federico made no effort to find them. He wished to forget her. He spoke of her but once. When he asked my great-grandmother's hand in marriage he told her that he had learned from an authentic source that his first wife was dead. Fate! He could have chosen any maiden in this country, for his wealth was great, and my great-grandmother was regarded as the most fortunate of women. She, too, came of pure Castilian blood, señor," and Miramonte looked up, with a gesture of pride. "It is good that the other wife bore no children. The Miramontes are without a taint.

"But, once wedded, Don Federico again withdrew from the world. A sad life she led—my great-grandmother. She bore him sons and daughters, and they all feared him more than they feared God or the devil. He seemed to care only to get money—to hoard it and hide it away. To this day people believe that there is money hidden in these ruins. You are amused, señor? You laugh?"

"Every ruin is said to conceal a treasure, you know," said Severson sceptically.

"*Vaya!*" replied the Spaniard, with apparent indifference. "Believe it or not, as you will; but searches have been made and money has been found—no matter! Don Federico lived to be ninety years old, and his wife was his slave, and his children were afraid to speak aloud in his presence. He had grandchildren, too—a sturdy brood. Strange that I alone am left! He would not permit them to learn the English language or recognise one who spoke it.

"You see, señor, I speak English with much care. I learnt it of necessity a few years ago. We Miramontes are born with a hatred of the English people and tongue. Don Federico would let no stranger cross his threshold, for he had no faith in women, and my great-grandmother dared never to speak to any man but her husband and the priest. Well, he died at last, and his heirs quarrelled among themselves, and in the end the place was sold to settle the dispute. And so it happened, señor, that this immense estate, which should now be mine, passed into the possession of aliens, and this house, which was built to shelter Don Federico's descendants for centuries, now stands empty and in ruins."

Severson, with his arms behind him, paced slowly through the deserted rooms. The walls were immensely thick. Each window made an alcove. The ceiling was broken where the roof had leaked, and the heavy tiles had fallen through; and patches of sky were visible here and there.

"Of course the place is haunted?" Severson queried, with a smile; "these old houses are always tenanted by ghosts."

Miramonte smoked vehemently for a moment. "The señor does not believe in ghosts?" he asked in non-committal tones.

"Well, hardly," answered Severson emphatically; "still I'd like to. It would make life intensely interesting. Do you?"

"Who can tell?" murmured the Spaniard, shrugging his shoulders; "I could tell you of things——" and he said nothing more. Severson extended his explorations, noting with growing admiration the immense solidity of the walls. Between two of the inner rooms he found a partition seven feet thick.

"Whew!" he whistled in amazement; "the old don built for all eternity—a seven foot wall!"

He struck it admiringly with his doubled fist, and to his surprise he heard a faint sound like falling mortar.

"Queer," muttered Severson; "it can't be very substantial after all," and he began to search for the defective spot. But, though he examined it on every side, the wall presented an unbroken surface. He struck again, and again he heard the mysterious sound.

"Miramonte!" he called excitedly; "Miramonte Come here!"

"What do you want?" the Spaniard replied, indolently rising from his seat on the floor in the farther room.

"Come here!" shouted Severson; "quick! I've made a discovery. This wall is hollow!"

Miramonte leapt to join him—not indolent now—his yellow face suffused, his eyes aflame.

"The money!" were his first words. "*Vive Dios!* the hidden money!"

Severson nodded affirmatively, and gave the wall another blow. "Listen, Miramonte," he said; "don't your hear the mortar falling inside? I tell you this wall is hollow. How shall we make a hole?"

Miramonte stood transfixed. "I hear, I hear," he murmured, in ecstasy, as if he were listening to celestial music. "Now—now, at last it will be found. I shall be rich once more."

"Think," urged Severson impatiently, "how to get inside. We have no tools."

"The roof!" cried the Spaniard. "My knife!—with my knife I can make an opening through the roof."

Instantly the two men ran out into the placita. Severson stopped to study the roof and fix in his mind the location of the inner room; but Miramonte, carrying his unsheathed hunting knife in his hand and trembling with eagerness, began at once to clamber over the fallen and mouldering outer walls.

"Be careful," cautioned Severson, "you'll break through the roof. The tiles are heavy; the beams are old and rotten. Be careful!" But the Spaniard scarcely seemed to hear.

Kneeling now upon the uneven roof he flung the loose tiles aside, and when Severson joined him he was hacking the tiles and rending the thongs that bound them together. Severson could hear him reiterating in Spanish while he worked: "The money—at last—the money!"

Soon a hole was made two feet in diameter. Miramonte thrust in his head till his shoulders rested upon the roof. Severson saw his body shake and heard him utter a hideous oath. "It is dark! I cannot see!" he cried aloud in a fury. "We must make the hole larger!" and he fell madly to work again.

At last the opening was four feet long. Miramonte's hands were bleeding; his face was smeared with perspiration and dirt. His eyes shone like smouldering coals. The dust which had accumulated for a century on the roof swirled in a cloud about them, and it was impossible to discern anything below. But gradually the dust settled, and slowly—how slowly! the air cleared, and the two men, kneeling on the verge of the opening they had made, gazed down into the apartment beneath them.

The Spaniard's face became ashen under its grime.

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His eyes were glassy and dull. "Virgin Santissima!" he whispered, slowly making the sign of the cross. "Mother of God! what do I see? *Dos Esqueletos!*"

Below them, in a narrow chamber—a mere cell, not four feet wide, without windows or doors—on a floor paved with square brick tiles, lay two skeletons, the skulls resting close together.

Looping his lariat round a rafter which crossed a hole in the roof, Severson lowered himself into the cell. Graven in Spanish upon a tablet in the wall, he read this legend:

"Here, shut in a living tomb, with her lover, is Don Federico Miramonte's faithless wife. Accursed be her soul."

LE VIER.

AN OYSTER SUPPER.

"WHEN I married I was a sort of Traddles; only I wasn't so heavily handicapped as Traddles, you see; for Cynthia had no sisters. My wife's a fine woman still, as you know; but when I married Cynthia, she was exceptionally pretty. It was rather a nuisance, because she was so good-looking that people used to turn round and stare at her, which always put the poor girl out of countenance. She certainly did her best not to attract attention; for we were horribly poor, and we had to be desperately economical in the matter of dress and in everything else. Why, many a time and oft has Cynthia cooked our little makeshift dinner of a couple of chops, or something equally economical, and cooked them well, too; there's no false pride about Mrs. Latitat."

Thus Latitat, Q.C., to me, as we sat in his handsome dining-room in Eaton Square. "I hate being under an obligation to a fellow," he continued; "but I've been under an obligation to a man for well-nigh twenty years. I borrowed money of him, you see," he added with a laugh, "and I wasn't able to get out of the debt till last week."

"I wonder how many times you've told me that you never borrowed a five-pound note in your life, Latitat," I said.

"Oh, I didn't borrow a five-pound note; the man obliged me under very peculiar circumstances, and from the night he came to my assistance till last week I have never set eyes upon him.

"We were living in Tarfield Court, fourth floor, and Sparkler Jones had given me two stalls for the Olympic. Poor old Sparkler! He was at the height of his success as a dramatic author. They didn't pay dramatic authors then as they do now; but he was doing very well indeed, and he admired Cynthia very much—in a respectful sort of way, of course—and gave us more seats than we knew what to do with. Cabs were a terrible item to us in those days, you know. But it wasn't a *sine quâ non* at that time to wear evening dress when you sat in the stalls. That's what I liked stalls for then. It enabled one to walk home.

"I took Cynthia to the Olympic, and we saw a burlesque of Jones's—*The Vampire Re-vamped*, I think it was called—and Glumper, the low comedian, played the Vampire, and sang a song with a chorus of 'I must have blood or I'll bust'; we both laughed till we cried. I don't suppose we should either of us laugh now at *The Vampire Re-vamped* — twenty years makes a wonderful difference. Well, we walked down the Strand after the play, for we were both hungry, and I had promised Cynthia an oyster supper. It was a tremendous piece of extravagance for me then; but oysters were only ninepence a dozen, and we were both desperately fond of them; so we went to R——'s in Maiden Lane, and we sat down in one of the boxes, and we ordered our oysters and our brown bread-and-butter and our stout. There was rather a flashily-dressed man supping at the box opposite to us. There he sat swallowing his oysters, with which he drank the most expensive Chablis they'd got in the place. I don't myself approve of Chablis with oysters—I prefer stout—and in those days I had to prefer stout."

"Well, we'd got through our modest four dozen, we had eaten our brown bread-and-butter, we had finished our stout. 'Waiter,' I said, 'what do we owe?'

"'Three-and-two,' replied the waiter.

"I felt in my pocket. Not a penny-piece.

"'Lend me your purse, my dear,' I said to my wife. She hadn't brought it with her.

"The waiter was a greasy and offensive-looking ruffian, and he grinned sarcastically. Of course, I had to eat humble pie.

"'I'm very sorry, waiter,' I said; 'I've left my purse at home. There is my card. I'll look round and settle in the morning, and you shall have a shilling for yourself.'

"'I knowed it,' said the waiter; 'I twigged ye when I saw ye come in. We've lots of customers like you. You'd better leave yer watch,' he added drily, 'and you can look round and settle in the morning,' he went on insolently, echoing my phrase.

"I was so angry I could have thrashed the fellow within an inch of his life; but there was nothing for it but to do as he suggested. I put my hand to my pocket; my watch was gone!

"I was dumfounded. I explained matters to the waiter. He got between me and the door at once.

"'You don't leave this place until you've settled, guv'nor,' he said brutally; he said a great deal more which I'll not repeat. I couldn't resent it, you know, and I thought my poor little Cynthia would have died of shame.

"Then the over-dressed man in the opposite box came to our assistance.

"'You infernal rascal,' he cried, addressing the waiter; 'what do you mean by insulting the gentleman?

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I've half a mind to break every bone in your body;' and he looked as if he could do it too. Then he pulled out a fat pocket-book. 'Take it out of that, you scoundrel,' he said, producing a ten-pound note, 'and look alive with the change. Take my supper out of it, too; and let me tell you, you scamp, that you've lost a customer. You'll never see my face again.'

"The waiter departed, and then the over-dressed man began to sympathise, and Cynthia thanked him through her tears. I thanked him, too; and, of course, I insisted on giving him my card."

Then Mr. Latitat fumbled in his waistcoat pocket, and produced the identical card.

"At one time," said Latitat, "I did a fair amount of criminal business. I was very glad indeed when I drifted out of it and into commercial cases, which, of course paid very much better. I wasn't half so much before the general public; all you saw of me in the newspapers, as a rule, was 'with him Mr. Latitat,' whereas in my early days there would be a long account, and often a verbatim report of 'the impassioned speech for the prisoner.' But the prisoner was very seldom indeed good for more than three guineas, and the shady attorneys, who were the favourite thieves' lawyers in those days, were very bad paymasters, who generally took long credit, and often never settled at all. But there was any amount of glory; whereas in the heavy commercial cases, 'with him Mr. Latitat' generally meant a fifty-guinea brief at the very least.

"I was breakfasting the other morning, when my man came in and said a person of the name of Pouter wished to see me, and that he would take no denial. I went to my study and saw the person of the name of Pouter. I had never seen Mr. Pouter before, but directly he opened his mouth I knew that he was a fourth-rate solicitor.

"'I've called to ask you to come down to-day to the Central Criminal, sir, to defend an unfortunate client of mine. I went to your chambers first, sir—indeed I did,' said Mr. Pouter.

"I got up at once. 'My good sir,' I said, 'I don't accept briefs on the criminal side any longer; and this visit is exceedingly irregular,' I added.

"'I told him so,' replied Mr. Pouter; 'I told him it was no use, but he insisted that you would come down, and he said that I was to give you this, sir; and he told me that I was just to say, "Oysters," which, I conclude, is a sort of sign or token.'

"Then he handed me this old card of mine: Mr. John Latitat, 2, Tanfield Court, Temple. My first chambers' Oysters? Oysters?

"'My client said,' began Mr. Pouter, with an oily smile, 'that he had had the pleasure of entertaining you and Mrs. Latitat at an oyster supper.'

"Then it came back to me in an instant. 'Sit down,' I said, 'who is your client?'

"'Party of the name of Quelch, alias Wheable. Been "in trouble" before; accused of "smashing."'

"I may tell you that 'smashing' means the passing of bad money. I accepted the brief Mr. Pouter handed to me; it was a three-guinea brief. My clerk would have turned up his nose at anything marked under twenty.

"I went down to the Central Criminal Court. A friend of mine was trying the coining cases as Commissioner in the Second Court. You don't often see a Q.C. in the Second Court at the Old Bailey. I and Gasper, Q.C., who was on the Bench trying these Mint cases, were the only silk gowns present. There was a crowd of the usual hacks and 'soupmen.' They all stared at me in astonishment. I found that Waggle, who gets his living mostly as a journalist, was retained with me for form's sake; a Q.C. cannot go into Court, you know, without a learned junior.

"I had read my brief in the cab. They work off an ordinary coining case, as a rule, in about a quarter of an hour. At ten minutes to one the Queen *versus* Quelch was called, and my client, a dreadfully shabby old man, was put to the bar. As he entered the dock he greeted me with a grateful wink.

"I got the man off on a technical point. They found him not guilty, and my friend Gasper, from the bench, said he hoped it would be a warning to him. Mr. Quelch walked out of the dock a free man.

"As I emerged into the Old Bailey I saw the poor old creature waiting for me on the pavement.

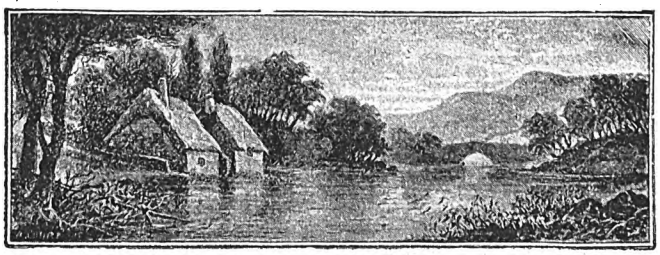
"'You did the bloomin' trick, guv'nor,' he said in a voice hoarse with gratitude and drink. 'It ain't the fust time as I have been in trouble, sir; but I hadn't got a mag to call my own to pay a counseller.'

"He was a dreadful-looking old man, aged before his time with vice and crime. I offered him a sovereign, and I thanked him for his kindness of twenty years ago. He waved the sovereign off.

"'Bless ye, guv'nor,' he said, 'I couldn't take it,' and then he winked knowingly. 'Do you know, guv'nor,' he said with a pleased air, 'that ten quid flimsy you helped me to pass at the oyster-shop was a duffer, too.'

"Then he gave me a patronising nod and disappeared into the crowd."

Ethel Dicey.



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THE MUFF OF THE REGIMENT.

"The new sub's arrived."

"Ah! What kind of a sort of a Johnnie is he?"

"Delicate, very delicate, and refined, quite refined. Doesn't smoke, doesn't drink—further particulars about himself when he's reported safe arrival to his 'mater.'"

"Oh, he's that sort, is he? Poor beggar!"

"You may well say that, Chilcott. The Royal Raspers have got a pretty fair record inscribed on their ragged colours, but their pre-eminent characteristic is rowdiness, and it's generally conceded to be the roughest regiment in the line for a youngster."

Foremost among Tibbits' tormentors was a certain Trafford Daunt, the senior lieutenant of his company. Daunt never lost an opportunity of "scoring off" him at mess, on parade, or elsewhere.

"Confound it, old chap," said Chilcott, one day, "you ought not to lead that poor little chap quite such a life. You are so remarkably down on him. It's hard lines on him. You are taking it out of poor Tibbits with a vengeance. What makes me so sorry for him is that he's a good-natured little chap. When I asked him why he didn't chuck your bull terrier out of his bedroom window he said it might hurt your feelings."

"My feelings!" shrieked Daunt. "Why the pup would have eaten him—slippers and all. Well, that beats cockfighting!"

At last an event occurred which led to a temporary cessation of the sub-lieutenant's troubles. But the interest in him somewhat revived when, with the Raspers aboard, the huge "trooper" glided like a grey spectre down the Solent, for Tibbits succumbed to *mal de mer* before the Horseshoe and Spit Forts had been passed.

"Bad, Tibby, old man?" asked Sub-Lieutenant Chilcott, as he laid a kindly hand on the shoulder of the inert heap of pallid humanity.

"I'm dreadfully bad, Chilcott. I—I say—if anything should happen you wouldn't mind sending my gold watch home to the mater. It was—was my dad's."

"Stuff! You'll be all right directly; try a brandy and soda—or, better still, eat an apple."

"Now, is that one of those jokes?" smiled Tibbits feebly.

"No, really," said the good-natured Chilcott.

"Don't you believe Chilly," shouted Daunt, joining them. "Look here, Tib, old man, ask the steward to fry you a pork chop, or some sausages, or try a few sardines -ha, ha, ha!" for the wretched Tibbits had risen and staggered out of sight.

* * * * * * *

Great was the elation of the Royal Raspers when within three months of their landing on the bank of the Hoogly they received orders to join an expedition proceeding up country for the purpose of "restoring order" in certain villages where an indiscreet Commissioner and a fanatical priest, in their endeavours to thwart each other, had between them managed to stir up a mutiny in miniature.

And the joy of the Raspers knew no bounds when, on reaching the disturbed area they found they were not "too late for the ball," that in all probability the warmest of the work was yet to come.

At last after a series of long and arduous forced marches the brigade, of which the Raspers formed the right wing, came upon the rebel stronghold, a well-fortified camp on the edges of an arid plain.

The enemy stubbornly refused to yield to the blandishments of the brigade, and "have it out" in the open, and for a time Gatlings and Maxim Nordenfeldts plied their rattling belch in vain upon the earthworks and bastions from behind which the rebels poured a fire that compelled the attackers to keep at a distance.

At last the Brigadier determined on a ruse. Orders were given for a feigned attack, and presently a "galloper" dashed up to order the Raspers to send forward two companies in open order.

Like slipped greyhounds they leapt from their cover and dashed forward, extending as they went till at last they formed a long skirmishing line, advancing, flopping, and firing, advancing, flopping, and firing, advancing again, and so on, till they were within some four hundred yards of the earthworks.

It was then that the rebels took the old soldier's bait. Out from the entrenchments streamed a powerful sortie bent on sweeping the thin line of skirmishers off the plain. Quickly the bugle pealed out a recall, and the Raspers stubbornly retired towards their base, turning, and kneeling at every sixth pace to take shots.

Meantime, the left wing of the attacking force was wheeling into position for a flank attack, but so hotly did the rebel sortie press forward that the captains of the two companies of Raspers, drawing their swords, held them aloft, and gave the word to rally.

Instantly the skirmishers rushed back and grouped themselves with fixed bayonets around their officers, who gave the command for independent firing.

"Hullo!" cried Chilcott, looking across the plain, "Daunt's hit—he's down! Poor beggar, it'll be all up with him if we're not reinforced. Steady, lads, give it 'em hot. By Jove! who's that helping Daunt along, and hoisting him on his back? By Jove! it's Tibby! Come on, Tibby, sharp! Just in time. Ah!"

For just as the huddled ranks opened to let in Tibbits staggering under his burden, the Muff of the regiment fell prone upon his face with a bullet between his ribs.

They dragged the two wounded men within the *chevaux de frise*, and a great cheer went up as from the left and the rear reinforcements swept up, and the rebels, perceiving the trap, turned and scuttled like rabbits for their burrows.

An hour later the officers of the Royal Raspers gathered round a prostrate form. It was Tibbits. Daunt, his leg in splints, held one hand, Chilcott the other.

"How is it now, old chap?" asked the latter, bending over the fast paling face.

Slowly on the silence came the feeble whisper:

"It's bad—in one way, but it's all right. I'm done for."

"Oh Heavens!" groaned Daunt with the first tears in his eyes those there had ever seen. "And for me—who was such a brute to you."

"No, no." With waning strength Tibbits pressed his comrade's hand. "I always knew—it was only—fun. I loved all you fellows—Chilly, send my watch to the mater—tell her——"

* * * * * * *

Yes. When Chilcott placed in the gentle lady's hand the watch dented by her son's death bullet, he told her how the Raspers with one voice confessed that they had lost in her boy one of the noblest hearts that ever beat beneath their war-worn colours.

Henry Johnson.

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When the Birds Begin to Sing

By Winifred Graham. *Author of "Through the Valley," "Six First-Class Passengers," etc.*

CHAPTER I.

And when Love Speaks.

She was certainly very pretty, and just then she looked prettier than usual, for the sharp run had brought a more vivid colour to the cheek, and an added sparkle to the eye. She was laughing, too—the rogue—as well she might, for had she not brought her right hand swiftly down upon his left ear when he had chased her, caught her, and deliberately and maliciously kissed her, and did he not now look red and foolish, and apparently repentant?

"Come and play wif us."

But let me start from the beginning, and tell you how it all came about.

* * * * * * *

Eleanor, the daughter of a neighbouring farmer, is as fresh and beautiful in the eyes of Philip Roche as the field flowers whose heads fall fading beneath his tread while he follows her through the long grass. He has watched her playing with the innocent school children—little more than a child herself—and then, with the calm assurance that to him is second nature, joins the merry throng unasked. The children greet him eagerly, after scrambling for a handful of silver from the stranger's pocket, for is it not the great, grand treat of all the year?

"Come and play wif us," lisps a little maiden of five summers, whom Philip tosses on to his shoulder with good-natured ease. He has a way of winning the confidence of children.

"What is the game?"

"Kiss in the ring!" cries a small boyish voice at his elbow.

The stranger's eyes twinkle as he watches the lovely unknown Eleanor arranging a circle. Placing his tiny friend again on her feet, and taking her brother's grimy hand, Philip Roche joins the hilarious pastime.

Eleanor glances across the ring well-pleasedly, guessing that her dainty figure and deep-fringed eyes have attracted him thither.

A moment later she trips lightly round the chain of children, her heart beating higher as her feet approach the man's tall figure. Shall she? Shall she? No time to consider, as the handkerchief falls from her hand upon Philip's shoulder.

Quick as lightning she flies away—faster—faster—through the buttercups, while he pursues, nearer—nearer—and then the strong arms arrest her career, and the inevitable kiss occurs.

Eleanor, her cheeks aflame, frees

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Faster—faster—through the buttercups.

herself from his audacious caress, and half laughing, half indignant, walks hastily away. But after their unconventional introduction Philip is not easily to be foiled.

"You are offended," he cries penitently. "It was only the game; won't you forgive me, Miss——?"

"Grebby," raising her eyes and pausing. "Eleanor Grebby," she continues with a prim little air that is quite unnatural, then laughing spontaneously:

"You see, I was rather taken aback at first, Mr.——"

"Roche—Philip Roche, at your service."

"So now we know each other," holding out her hand.

He grasps it eagerly—such a warm little slim hand!

"It was rather a nice introduction, wasn't it?"

Philip thinks how amazingly pretty Eleanor is, as she assents with deepening colour.

"There! I knew it would come!" she cries, with a thought for her new poppy-bedizened hat.

"What?" asks Philip, still feasting his eyes on the girl's fair physique, and unobservant of the gathering darkness overhead.

"Why, the rain, of course. We shall get wet."

"Only a summer shower."

"Yes, but as disastrous in its effects as any other downpour. I shall make for that barn in the next field; the children have all mysteriously vanished."

"I am dreadfully afraid of the wet," declares Philip, pretending to shiver. "May I accompany you?"

He is still retaining her hand as they run together towards the haven of shelter.

"How nice of it to rain!" he gasps, applauding the accommodating skies. "Let me make you comfortable," heaping together a pile of hay for her to sit upon. "Now tell me all about yourself."

Eleanor sinks down on the soft couch, looking somewhat wistfully through the open door of the barn.

"I am easily explained. I live here always. My father is a farmer, and I feed the chickens, dust the house, and teach in the Sunday-school. Only fancy what an exciting life, Mr. Roche. Doesn't it take your breath away?"

At the thought of her own humdrum existence Eleanor laughs again with a return of that superabundant vitality which is hers by nature.

"Then once or perhaps twice a year I am invited to tea at the Vicarage, and I sit up straight in a high-backed chair and say 'Yes' and 'No' when I am spoken to, and answer prettily—like a schoolgirl. The vicar's wife would have a fit if I lounged like this," flinging herself back with an air of abandon on the hay. "Once she asked me to sing (I play the harmonium in church). My cousin Joe had brought me a comic song from town, and I couldn't help for the life of me getting up and giving her a verse.

"Of course it was wrong, and she looked frightfully shocked. I have certainly never been invited to tea since. Oh, how I should like to sing at concerts and halls—I mean the sort of places where you have an eyeglass, and walk round with a hat and stick!"

Her face beamed as she delivered this sentence—involuntarily the little hands clasped themselves together in excitement.

"Be thankful that such an ambition is ungratified," declares Philip, speaking seriously for the first time. "You do not know the fate that you are coveting. Rest contented, child, to remain your own sweet self. Your country life is ideal compared with—*that!*"

Eleanor shakes her head.

"It doesn't seem like it," she declares.

"No; I dare say not. Duty is sometimes heroism in its noblest form."

"Then are all the people wicked that go to London, and sing, act, and enjoy themselves?"

"Indeed I trust not. We should have a pretty bad time of it if they were. Yet I don't know that you're far wrong. Few are guileless. But why talk of it? Time enough to warn you of the pitfalls when you are on your road to the great city."

"What is your life?" asks Eleanor curiously, drawing the long ends of hay through her teeth with a meditative smile.

"Scarcely less monotonous than yours, Miss Grebby"—an amused look in his eyes. "Instead of feeding chickens I feed my friends—lunches, dinners, midnight suppers—all of which pall terribly after a time. Instead of dusting my

Eleanor sinks down on the soft couch.

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house I leave it to accumulate dust, while I wander abroad. A home is a dull place for one man."

"You have no wife or mother?"

"No."

"But you must have lots of money. Why, only think of all the silver you threw to the children this afternoon! I do not believe they had ever seen so many shillings and sixpences before."

"Money will not buy a mother or——" He was going to say "a wife," but checked himself. Philip Roche was an accurate man.

"Poor Mr. Roche, it must be very lonely," says Eleanor, with genuine sympathy in her tone.

He smiles enigmatically. It is strange to him to be pitied by the little farmer's daughter when so many have envied his happy-go-lucky existence ere now.

"The rain clouds are dispersing," he murmurs, as a stray ray of sunlight wanders through the barn door to mingle its glory with Eleanor's hair. How gold those tender silken threads appear under its burnishing hand!

"What a pity! It has been such a refreshing shower!"

"I feel quite young again," he declares, "young enough to play with the children for hours. What do you say to kiss in the ring again?"

He presses her hand gently.

She lifts her eyes to his with a slow shake of her head.

"There is the vicar's wife to be considered."

"Good gracious!" he laughs. "You don't mean I should have to kiss her?"

Eleanor's face dimples all over in delightful smiles.

"What an absurd idea!" she gasps gleefully. "I should just like to see you!"

"I don't think it has *quite* stopped," murmurs Philip, holding up his hands to the sky, and pretending the drops from the barn are rain themselves.

"How silly you are!" cries Eleanor mockingly, gathering up her skirts and revealing a well-turned ankle. "But, oh, isn't the grass soaking?" as Philip takes her arm and guides her to a narrow path. "The children will ruin their boots, and all go home with colds. Look, they are tearing about like mad things. How they will sleep to-night!"

"I wonder what will become of them all in the years to follow, and why they have any existence whatsoever beneath the glimpses of the moon?"

"One will reap," replies Eleanor wisely, "and another will sow. Some may slay oxen and wring the fowls' necks, and perhaps for all we know murder each other. It is a horrible thought, isn't it? They look so thoroughly innocent, these country children. Do you see that little boy crying because he was knocked down in the three-legged steeplechase. His life race is only just beginning. His father is in gaol for theft, his mother incurable in a Samaritan infirmary, yet he is only crying because he grazed his knee and did not win a packet of bull's-eyes."

Eleanor's voice is low and expressive as her deep sapphire eyes—fascinating the man by their changeful beauty—one moment light and dancing like the sunbeams in the branches, the next overflowing with pity for a pauper child.

The little ones gather round, clinging to her skirts. She is tender and kind to all, though her gaze rests chiefly on the tall, sunburnt stranger making himself popular with the youngsters in her class.

"Look, teacher," cries the same wee maiden who is responsible for Philip's first appearance in their games. "I won 'er, 'opping along o' Margery in the big race," holding aloft a doll with great staring glass eyes and brilliantly rouged cheeks. "Ain't she beautiful?"

"What will you name her?" asks the Sunday-school teacher sweetly.

"Don't know," sighs the child perplexedly.

"Eleanor," suggests Philip.

"We 'ad a little sister named Eleanor, but she 'adn't got enough blood in her, so she died."

"Then you must call your doll by another name," says Miss Grebby decidedly.

But the small girl shakes her head, and announces with precision:

"I'll call 'er Eleanor!" and marches away well satisfied, to re-open a half-closed wound in her mother's breast.

"I hit on an unfortunate suggestion," whispers Philip, while the ever energetic Miss Grebby initiates him into the mysteries of "Nuts in May," "Poor Mary sits a-weeping," and "I have a little dog."

The soft twilight gradually creeps over this summer world, and the great red sun sinks down in its sea of fire behind the trees.

The birds chirp a good-night song, till their piping is drowned by the hearty cheers of the happy children ringing out stirringly on the still damp air.

"And now—home!" sighs Eleanor, with a little grimace, as Philip bends down to fasten a spray of wild honeysuckle in her belt.

"May I see you back?" he asks eagerly, noting the bright smile that flits across her lips at the suggestion.

"*Could* you walk a mile?" questions Eleanor in mock astonishment. "I thought London people always drove. The vicar's wife had some friends from South Kensington who were positively lame if they went any distance on foot. They said our country roads were a disgrace—no asphalte, no hansom cabs."

"Come along," murmurs Philip, whose long strides are not easy to keep pace with. They walk more slowly when out of sight. Oh, the delightful dawdle back through the vague shadows of evening in sweetly scented lanes! How merrily she prattles with charming ingenuousness, while he watches her expressive features, a new strange thrill at his heart.

What if on this summer holiday, among the clover and the daisies, he has discovered the one spotless soul of his life—a fresh, unsophisticated creation of Nature's noblest and purest art!

At last they are in sight of the old farmhouse which Eleanor calls home. It is a picturesque spot, and Philip stops admiringly to take in the beauty of the rural scene.

"So you live there in that quiet abode?" he said thoughtfully.

"Yes. I am sorry to-day is over. It has not only been a holiday for the children, but half the village. The labourers are to have a dinner to-night and——"

She paused. The labourers and the children are so far from her mind at this moment.

"I shall see you again," he whispers.

"Where and when?" asks Eleanor, feigning surprise.

"To-morrow in this cornfield on our left. I shall walk past."

"Like Boaz, and Ruth will be gleaning," she replies coyly.

"What will Boaz do?" he murmurs.

Eleanor lowers her eyes, and interlaces her fingers.

"I know," she replies confidently.

In the dim light Philip fancies that Eleanor is weaving some strange witchcraft. He is drawn involuntarily nearer, and snatching her hand detains it a moment in both his. She is more beautiful than ever now in the dim solitude of the deserted road. The simplicity of her daily routine in the country farmhouse appeals to this man of the world, who yearns for something different, something better in his aimless, empty life—aimless because he has no one to work for, empty because there is no one to love.

Eleanor's gentle presence in the gathering gloom quickens his imagination. A picture wonderful and hitherto undreamed rises like a sudden mirage before Philip's eyes.

He seems lost in contemplation.

"I have found her at last," he says, speaking his thoughts aloud.

"Who?" asks Eleanor under her breath.

"The Ideal Woman!" he replies.

The girl looks perplexed—she does not understand the

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phrase. New Women and rational costumes have not yet penetrated to the depths of Copthorne, so their counterpoising ideal is to her an unknown quantity.

Eleanor's ignorance of modernity constitutes a special charm in his eyes. How sweet a privilege to build up this

Brightening the pewter dinner service.

uncultured soul, to mould her impressionable spirit! Philip is enamoured of the idea; he sees such vast possibilities stretching out before him. Eleanor differed so widely from the women of his set. Perhaps the weaker sex are made variously that the mind of desultory man, studious of change, and pleased with novelty, may be indulged.

"How long have we known each other?" he asks.

"About three hours," she answers promptly.

"How deep can one go below the surface in one hundred and eighty minutes?"

Eleanor seems bewildered; she is at a loss for words.

"Have I only been with you so short a time?" he says incredulously. "Can it be possible?"

"Does it seem long?" she asks looking down shyly. "Have I wearied you, Mr. Roche?"

His smile reassures her.

"It does not seem *long*, only *full* to the brim. To every second a fresh thought, an inch deeper into the unknown."

"I have never met anyone before," she declares frankly, "who spoke to me like that."

Then with a swift "Good-night" Eleanor breaks away and vanishes among the shadows.

"A wife," says Philip to himself, "is something between a hindrance and a help. Is this the turn of the tide?"

A nightingale broke into song. "Yes!" it cried; "yes—yes—yes!"

CHAPTER II.

"Imparadis'd in One Another's Arms."—*Milton.*

Eleanor is busy in the morning sunlight, brightening the pewter dinner service, the pride of the Grebby family, passed down from generation to generation, and priceless in her eyes. She can hear the preparations without for an early start to the neighbouring market. Her mother is loading a cart of vegetables, while her father "shoos" the cackling geese into wicker pens, and harnesses "Black Bess," the steady old mare, who is almost one of themselves. And Eleanor is glad that the market (a weekly centre of attraction to the whole village) will leave her in peaceful solitude.

She breaks out into a glad song, which mingles with the twittering of birds.

"There was a jolly miller once,
Lived on the river Dee."

"Eleanor, Eleanor, give me a hand with these vegetables," cries her mother's voice. There is a thud, and a whole sack of potatoes fall pell-mell into the yard, still muddy from yesterday's rain.

Eleanor gathers them up, indulging the same tuneful mood.

"He worked and sang from morn till night,
No lark more blithe than he!"

She has a strong, sweet-toned voice, and "Black Bess" turns her head sleepily at the sound, whisking the tiresome flies with her tail. So often Eleanor's tread at the door of her shed has meant apples and carrots and sugar.

She wipes the potatoes clean with her apron, replacing them carefully at the back of the cart.

Mrs. Grebby takes the reins, while Mr. Grebby follows on foot, driving a few specially honoured sheep, who frequently serve him for conversation throughout an entire evening spent smoking with neighbouring farmers.

Eleanor watches them out of sight, her hand over her brow to shade the dazzling sunlight from her eyes. A group of chickens congregate around her with mute inquiry in their beaky faces. She fetches a handful of grain from the barn, flings it into their midst, and returns singing to her pewter polishing.

"And this the burden of his song
For ever used to be:

"How dull this soup tureen is, to be sure!" pausing in the verse to rub it with extra vigour.

"I care for nobody, no not I,
If no one cares for me!"

The delinquencies of the dimmed soup tureen are forgotten as these last words ring out in the quiet parlour. "Surely," thinks Eleanor, "there is hidden pathos in the Jolly Miller of Dee's reckless assertion! To care for nobody! What a horrible thought—a whole life's tragedy lies in the closing verse. If no one cares for me!"

Eleanor sighs and leans her chin on her hands, kneeling before the wooden table on which the dinner service is spread. What if nobody cared for her! How vast and miserable a wilderness this world would be! Why, even the dumb animals love her.

The little goat she called Nelly, who fell ill the week before, and gasped out its breath in her arms on a dry heap of hay, gave all the love of its disputed soul to Eleanor. Of course, it had a soul; she made up her mind long ago on this point. How can a creature with such mysteriously human eyes as Nelly possessed be less human than the great plodding, loose-mouthed ploughboy, who only gapes when he is spoken to, and contains what Mr. Grebby is pleased to call, "only half a intellec'!"

Eleanor glances at the old-fashioned clock in the corner, decorated by grotesque pottery dogs and four-legged creatures with horns, and faces resembling tigers or cats. She has been up since five, for besides market day it is churning morning, and she and her mother have worked for hours in the dairy. The rattle of traps on their way to the village with goods to sell still can be heard without. One old man cries as he goes along for the benefit of the chaise behind him:

"Greengages, penny a pound,
All the year round!"

Eleanor laughs, leans out of the window, shaking her fist at him.

"What an absurd old man!"

"Bring me ten pounds on the 1st of January," she cries. The old man grins to himself as his pony breaks into a slow trot, carrying his master out of earshot.

Then Eleanor glances again at the fleeting moments.

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Glancing at her reflection in a cracked glass.

Tick! tick! tick! How slowly the hand of the clock moves round.

"It is time," she says at last, washing her small hands under the scullery tap, and reaching for a hat hanging on the kitchen dresser.

"I wish I had something pretty to wear," she sighs, glancing at her reflection in a cracked glass. "Laces and ribbons, beautiful blue ribbons with pink spots, like the Squire's nieces wore last Sunday. The tall girl was dreadfully plain, and I should have looked so well in her silk gown, with the shorter sister's chiffon fichu."

Eleanor's face brightens at the recollection of those costumes in the Manor House pew, which appeared so lovely in her eyes while she played the Magnificat. Dreams of dainty dresses are as dear to her heart as the occasional thoughts of love which steal over her at times. "If the two could be combined," she thinks, "love and wealth."

It is amazing, this new and sudden desire for something better, which all but stops the beating of Eleanor's heart.

"If he loved me," she gasps, "*if*—" she staggers back against the half-closed door, her fingers clenched and pressed to her temples, throbbing with intense excitement. All the thoughts that crowd to her brain are offsprings of that improbable "if," each moment growing more dazzling!

She hastens with light footsteps to an old cupboard in which her mother has treasured some hand-made lace left in her aunt's will to the Grebbys of Copthorne Farm.

She turns down her collar to reveal a shapely throat, pearly white, and hidden usually from the sun's scorching power, round which the soft folds of lace fall entrancingly.

What would Eleanor's mother say could she see her precious heirloom donned hastily on this busy market morning, to adorn her daughter's neck for a stroll through the fields! It is sacrilege surely, but the prize!

The girl closes the cupboard noiselessly, creeping away like a criminal out into the glaring day. Her eyes dance, her cheeks are flushed, and her hair escaping (as if by accident) from its neat braids, waves in dainty tendrils round her ears.

"I *am* beautiful," she murmurs to herself, "why not? Stranger things have happened—Eleanor Roche, the wife of a rich man—oh!"

The last is a gasp of hitherto unexpressed surprise at the audacity of her day dreams.

Philip is waiting by the barley field, watching for her. As she sees him she slackens her steps, not wishing to appear over anxious for the rendezvous. He advances eagerly, grasps her hands, and devours her with his eyes.

"So we meet again, Eleanor," he whispers. "I *must* call you Eleanor; you don't mind?"

A bold answer that inwardly makes her tremble enters the girl's head. Why not place herself on an equality with him at once? She nerves herself to reply:

"Not if I may call you Philip?"

A look of amused surprise flits over Mr. Roche's features. What a naïve, childlike manner Eleanor possesses!

"Of course," he replies, pulling the small hand through his arm, and turning out of the public thoroughfare.

"Come where the honeysuckle grows," he says softly, "and let us talk."

"I wonder what you think of me?" asks Eleanor unhesitatingly.

The great sparkling eyes are raised to his with genuine curiosity in their depths. She is not seeking a compliment; far from it, she really wants to know, and is waiting for the truth.

He looks from the blue eyes of the girl to the little blue bird's-eye growing on a bank of clover. She pauses while he stoops to gather the tiny flower.

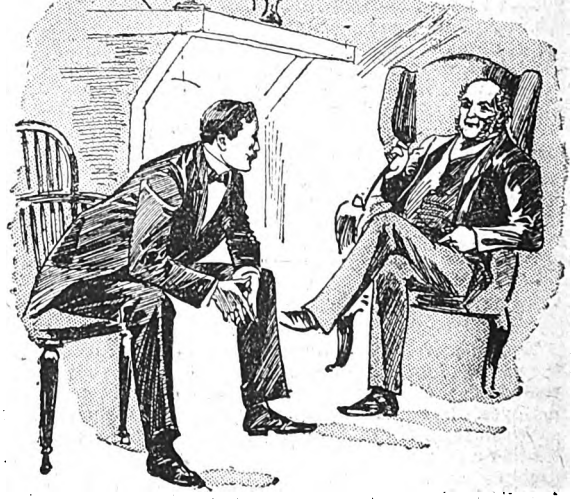
"You see this," he says.

"Yes."

"It is only a field blossom blooming unnoticed in this sweet country atmosphere, yet to me a thousand times fairer than the exotics and hot-house plants which naturally demand admiration. I love this little flower," pressing the tender blue to his lips, "because it is wild and untrained. It appeals to me. It is like you, Eleanor!"

A flush of offence rises to her cheeks.

"Wild!" "Untrained!" the words sting Miss Grebby's pride.



Discussing the crops and the weather with her father.

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"I did not think you would compare me to a *weed!*" she retorts, tossing her head proudly.

But Philip will not see he has offended, and continues in the same strain.

"Don't despise the weeds, Eleanor, they were placed in their uncultivated beds by Nature's hand, and have as much right to be called beautiful as any other creation."

He speaks to her authoritatively, and she looks at his strong, masterful expression with a gradual sense of awe.

"I should not have thought you would care for flowers."

"Why not? Does it seem childish in your eyes to soliloquise over a wayside 'weed,' as you call it?"

His questions perplex her. She is silent.

"You do not appreciate your beautiful country," he continues, "from living in it always. Wait till you have tasted the deadly dust of the town before you curl your lip at a blue bird's-eye, or pass judgment on the unbroken quiet of sinless Copthorne. Since I came here for rest and holiday leisure I seem to have grasped the whole history and charm of the place. It contains endless interest in its Godlike simplicity to the recluse or the reader. Look what fields for the naturalist or botanist! Think, too, of an artist here for the first time—what sketches to be made at sunrise and sunset! You may call your little world dull, monotonous, uneventful, since reared in the green landscape with farmlands and woods around you are bound through custom to neglect the pleasures of imagination, and see it only without observing."

"I am glad you are so enthusiastic over Copthorne," replies Eleanor, catching at the meadow-sweet, and crumbling it between her fingers. "I suppose you have been living a very different life in London?"

"It is a great change," he replies, "from the bustle of fashion to the unbroken quiet. But I must own I didn't enjoy so completely all the beauty of this glad country scene till *you* came, Eleanor, happy in the rich possession of youth and lightheartedness."

Now his conversation grows interesting, the perfect smile with which she is naturally blessed creeps through her lips to her eyes, illuminating her whole countenance. In the distance the regular click of a reaping machine falls on the breeze.

"You must see more of our life," she says impetuously. "Next week all our labourers will be reaping, and our barns are ready for the first loads of harvest. Do not go till it is gathered in!"

"Shall I promise? Would it give you pleasure?"

"Yes."

A pause, during which an old horse puts his nose over the gate of an adjacent field, regarding Philip and Eleanor complacently.

"Then it's a bargain! If *you* will be pleased, I will stay; but not unless."

A little gasp escapes her lips.

"Can you doubt it, Philip?" she murmurs.

He is satisfied by the earnest tone, gratified by her humility and undisguised devotion.

"Would you like to see my home?" she asks, for their steps are nearing the quaint farmhouse.

"Indeed, I should."

She takes him from the sloping cornfield, topped by a windmill, to where the path joins a kitchen garden—a perfect holiday ground for bees. The vegetables seem in perfect harmony with yellow marigolds and calceolaria. The house is divided from the road by palings richly covered by virginia creepers, and as they approach Philip pauses to lean on the wicker gate and view the peaceful homestead silently. The drone of bees and busy presence of insect toil is soothing and melodious. He takes Eleanor's hand and kisses it in the full glare of the mid-day sun under the heavily laden fruit trees. Then they pass by the brilliant flower-beds to the rustic porch, through which is visible the Grebbys' twelve o'clock repast spread on a clean white linen cloth, a vase of wild flowers for simple decoration. There are bright coloured texts on the walls, and an old Family Bible under a glass case.

"My mother will be back from the market directly," says Eleanor; "would you do us the honour of stopping to dinner?"

The tone becomes a supplication, mingled with smiles.

"You are too kind," declares Philip, touched by the unostentatious hospitality of his newly found friend. "I shall be most delighted."

"Come and let us watch for the return of Black Bess," she cries, leading the way out into the garden again. Philip thinks he has never spent a more delightful morning.

To have missed it would have been to lose one of the sweetest episodes of his life. The intense restfulness of Copthorne Farm, the fragrance of the air, the softness of the carpet beneath his feet, the cattle browsing in verdant pastures, and the murmur of those winged and drowsy honey-laden workers from the meadows, make a picture which will never pass from his mind. For the moment, while basking in the harvest sun, a scene which must some day be only a faded pleasure left to recollection, is Paradise!

Then the Grebbys' return from their marketing, to welcome the stranger whom Eleanor proudly introduces. Hospitality is a creed with them, and renewing their daughter's invitation, they place the choicest their home affords before the unexpected guest. Thus it is that Philip Roche finds himself in Eleanor's family circle, discussing the crops and weather with her father, a rubicund, hale old man, whose life is centred in bucolic pursuits.

* * * * * * *

The harvest is over, the wheat and barley are garnered, but still Philip lingers, chained by that mysterious agent the world calls—Love!

He sees the embodiment of all he most admires in Eleanor, the sweet domesticated country maiden, pure as the health-laden breezes sighing through the trees. His love ennobles his being, he is surprised at this inexplicable and unfathomable passion.

"Eleanor," he says, "I am going away—I want to take you with me. Will you be my wife?"

It is more a command than a question. He cannot do without her. She *must* consent.

The girl's breath comes and goes swiftly; for a moment he fears she will faint.

The future dances before her swimming brain, the alluring prospect of money, position, pleasure, whisper like fiends in Eleanor's ears. Love is forgotten; she only remembers the vague unsatisfied ambitions of her young dreams. She lets him kiss her lips again and again, she is clasped in his arms, yet feels them not; her mind fixed on the dazzling picture of "what is to be!"

"Your answer, Eleanor, darling — love!" he gasps, watching the glorious colour mount to her face, the marvellous radiance fill her eyes.

"Yes, Philip, your wife always!" Her head is on his shoulder, he has gathered her hands about his neck. The brief midday hours fly as she yields to the tender wooing.

"Soon," he whispers, "autumn's fingers of decay will creep over Copthorne, while leaves must fall damp and dead in the country lanes. Marry me, Eleanor, now the summer is here."

She starts back, a deadly fear knocking at her heart. She laughs, apparently frivolous and light-hearted.

"Yes, in the summer, sometime next year."

"Next year!" his face falling. "But when? Next year has 365 long days!"

She smiles entrancingly, shrugging her shoulders.

"Oh! well—when the birds begin to sing."

"No," he cries, drawing her to him, "before they are silent, Eleanor, before the light of summer goes out of the heavens, and the blue sky fades to grey!"

Her eyes droop, her cheek is pale.

(To be continued.)

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"But, Boris, I know it. Thou canst not be always like this, and thou wilt return to thine own people. The white Russian girls are very beautiful, and thou art beautiful, Boris."

"Nay, Hasna, thou art wrong. The daughters of my land are indeed lovely; they are flaxen-haired, and like the sun shining full on the gold of Tillah-Karri; but thou art all to me, and their loveliness is as the autumn moon on the wonderful glories of the Gur Emir."

"Oh, Boris, thy words are sweeter than honey, but I am a woman and I fear."

"Fear not, my pearl of price. Hast thou not my word? Hast thou not all my love, all my heart? Let us cease this foolish talk, Hasna. See the evening lightning how it plays there over the black masses of the Shir-Dar. Listen to Abdoul's zither, and his song of the glories of Timour. Let us come into the garden, Hasna, and we will visit thy rose-trees and cull the sweetest blossoms to perfume thy couch to-night."

Boris Alekhin meant it all. He was indeed enchanted with the Uzbek girl, and felt the hours days when he was not listening to the accents of her fervid speech, and gazing on her lustrous beauty. He had poured out before her the wealth of his passionate nature. Cards and wine, dinners, and fine society were all relinquished that he might devote his life to the ineffable charm of this Eastern girl's presence.

His wealth and his voluptuous tastes were employed in fitting out the exquisite little bungalow outside the walls, and every luxury that he thought might fascinate her—carpets, flowers, zithers, perfumes, rare brocades from India and China. And yet Hasna would have cast all this behind her, and lived in a wretched hovel could she thereby strengthen in ever so slight a degree the love of her Russian lord.

But it came about that Alekhin's regiment, after three years' idleness in Samarkand, was ordered up the Oxus to Kirki. This was a terrible blow to Hasna, for strict orders had been given that the regiment was to be unimpeded by the company of women and children.

Alekhin felt it very keenly as well, but he was busy with the bustle of departure, and his thoughts were of military honours to be won on active service. Plunging through the deep sands of the Turkestan desert, along the desolate banks of the mighty river, overhead a pitiless sky of brass, the strong men falling out and dying by the wayside, a hot cicala from the south blowing clouds of fine sand in their faces—the regiment struggled on to Kerki.

There they had frontiers to delimit, and Afghans and wild Vakhan hillsmen to watch, and reservoirs and dams to build, and barracks to repair. Cholera was speeding along towards them from Meshad, and the black plague from Balkh, and the doctors discovered guinea worm in the water, and an unknown disease that was killing the camels and horses by inches.

It was all miserable, and the officers drank hard, and gambled hard, and two or three of the sillier and more sentimental of them dispatched themselves, after sending home long letters to their mothers, and packages containing their watches and silver cigarette-cases to their sisters.

Alekhin did nothing so foolish; he worked hard; but he often thought longingly of the shady garden inside the high walls, and of his bright Hasna in the bijou bungalow, whose speech was so musical, whose dark eyes were so wonderfully mysterious, and who loved him so. They never wrote to one another. Hasna could not write, and Boris would not put that on paper which might go through so many hands, and be seen by so many eyes before it reached her.

Alekhin's regiment sweltered fourteen months in Kerki, and then the longed for order came—they were to return to Samarkand, draggled, scorched, fever-stricken. They arrived in their old quarters. Three days was granted for an orgy, and I trust my gentle readers have no notion of how unspeakable a Russian orgy is. Alekhin had been counting the hours to the delicious meeting with Hasna, and not a moment did he lose in hastening to the well-known wicket. He gave the well-known signal, and impatiently repeated it, then incontinently kicked in the door, and was met by Abdoul, gasping, staring, and trembling. Abdoul's lips strove to say something, but they emitted no sound. He weakly sought to bar Alekhin's way.

"Out of my road, idiot! Why don't you speak? What are you mumbling about? Where's your mistress?"

"Oh, lord and master, don't go there! I intreat you in Allah's name! I will speak."

But Alekhin sprang forward. He rushed to the house and entered the well-known room. From the glare of noon-day light into the shade of the room his eyes were blinded for a moment, and he saw nothing; but he heard a sob, a stifled groan, and going forward a step he stumbled on a female figure, bowed, thickly veiled, sitting on the floor, and her right hand wrapped in a black cloth. He drew back a few steps.

"Hasna, my Hasna, what is this? Is this thy welcome of me? What did Abdoul mean?"

"Come not nearer, Boris; for the love of Allah not nearer. Nay, don't touch me!" And she shrank from him. "Canst thou not guess? Why do I not show thee my face? Why is my hand thus? Why, after all these weary moons, do I not rise and embrace thee, my lord and my king? Oh, leave me! I am unclean—unclean!"

Alekhin bent down, stupefied, and would have removed the veil; but at his touch, the girl uttered a piercing shriek, and fell prone upon the floor. Horrified, dizzy, fearing he knew not what, he turned round. Abdoul, with bent head, was standing beside him. "Master," he whispered, "Hasna is a leper! Come away!"

Alekhin never knew how he reached his club. It was to his club he went. But he joined in the dreadful orgy of his comrades, and forgot *that*. He sang the vilest

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songs, drank the strongest *vodka*, played wildly, made night hideous, sullied his soul; and then he quietly went home to quarters, pale, silent, ashamed.

Now, Alekhin had undoubtedly distinguished himself on the frontier. He had captured some important secret dispatches that were on their way between the potentates in Cabul and Bokhara. He had also invented a weir that turned out of great service in the construction of a dam, and his superior officer refused—*mirabile dictu*—to take the credit of all this, and recommended him for promotion.

And as just then they wanted a clever young man in the Ministry of War, a young man who knew all about Turkestan, it came about that Alekhin had hardly recovered from his hurricane of debauch when he was invited to proceed to St. Petersburg, to fill one of the posts most eagerly sought after by brilliant young officers with a career.

The appointment flattered him; the kind things said by the Colonel, the congratulations of his comrades soothed him. There was only one shadow, and that black, brooding, terrible. But as the days wore on, and his ambition rose, and he nourished a feeling of satisfaction with himself, he thought less of that awful veiled figure in the house in the garden.

He sent for Abdoul, and with coolness and method he explained to the old man that he was leaving for St. Petersburg, and that he wished to make handsome provision for him and his charge. The old Mussulman listened to all the arrangements, bowed a profound salaam, and vanished.

Next day Alekhin was sent away with princely honours, and his hopes rose higher and higher and took wings to themselves. The joy of travelling home filled him, and he thought of mother and sisters and of his house on the Nevsky Prospect; and once or twice, in the luxurious comfort of his first-class compartment, of girls he knew as a lad. "Wonder where they all are. Wonder if Lolya is married yet." But this reflection stung him, and he thought of Hasna. "Poor Hasna!" he sighed.

In St. Petersburg it was the best society he met. The pleasantest and nicest girls made love to the brilliant young officer from Central Asia. And once there was a delightful picnic to the Bezborodka gardens all in his honour, and his old playmate Lolya was there, still unmarried. And he and Lolya talked of old times, and wandered under the shady trees, and he told her all about Samarkand and Kerki—no, no, not everything, but enough for Lolya. Weeks went on, and at last there was a brilliant marriage in St. Isaac's, and Alekhin and Lolya went to Vienna, and after a month returned to their beautiful villa supremely happy.

But in that odorous garden outside the walls of Samarkand, Hasna was fretting out her soul, and the terrible disease was making rapid inroads. Night and day she worried Abdoul for news of Alekhin, and was told that he had gone to St. Petersburg, but would soon return. And when she knew that death was nearing, and that perhaps Boris would not be back in time, an unquenchable desire to see him again possessed her, and she gave the old man no rest until he consented to take her there where *he* tarried so long.

So when the time came for the merchants of Tabriz and Bokhara to set out on the road to the great fair at Nijni Novgorod, Abdoul, dressed as one of them, and with a thickly-veiled figure at his side, whom he declared was his wife, took the train across the desert to the Caspian, and the steamboat over the Caspian to Astrakhan, and another steamboat up to Volga to Novgorod, and the train again to St. Petersburg.

And veiled Hasna crouched on the decks of the steamers after the manner of Eastern women travelling, and the sailors and passengers made fun of her and of Abdoul; but they never saw her face. Had they seen that there would have been no more laughter. In St. Petersburg they took refuge in a low, waterside lodging-house, and Abdoul soon heard all about Alekhin, all about Lolya and the lovely villa, and the brilliant company they were entertaining on their return from their honeymoon. But he only told Hasna that he had discovered where Alekhin lived, and that he would take her there that evening, when she would see him.

When it grew dark Abdoul and Hasna stole from their wretched lodging and wandered out to the fashionable suburb. It was a lovely night, and the fresh, cool scent of northern flowers was in the air, and blackbirds sang in the trees. It was midsummer, casements were flung open, and Hasna saw men and beautiful women in luxurious apartments, and heard music and laughter and the merry voices of children. Opposite a charming villa Abdoul stopped. It was a few yards back from the road, and jasmine and roses covered it. The rooms were all lighted up, and the long French windows were open. A crowd of ladies and gentlemen filled the spacious apartments; the band was playing a waltz, and every one was dancing.

"There he is," whispered Hasna. "Oh, how beautiful he is! Oh, my Boris, my Boris!"

"Come away, Hasna; thou hast seen him."

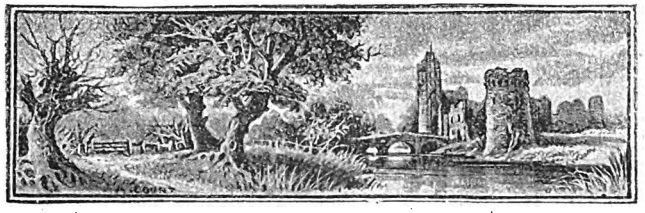
"Nay, a moment longer. Who is that in his arms? Ah, how lovely she is! She loves him. See her eyes. Who is she?"

"His wife."

The frail girl let her head droop down on the low stone wall that surrounded Alekhin's grounds, but she said nothing. Her veil slipped to one side, and a passer-by got a glimpse of the stricken silver-grey face, and will never forget it.

Abdoul led Hasna away, and they returned to their people.

Capel Chernilo.



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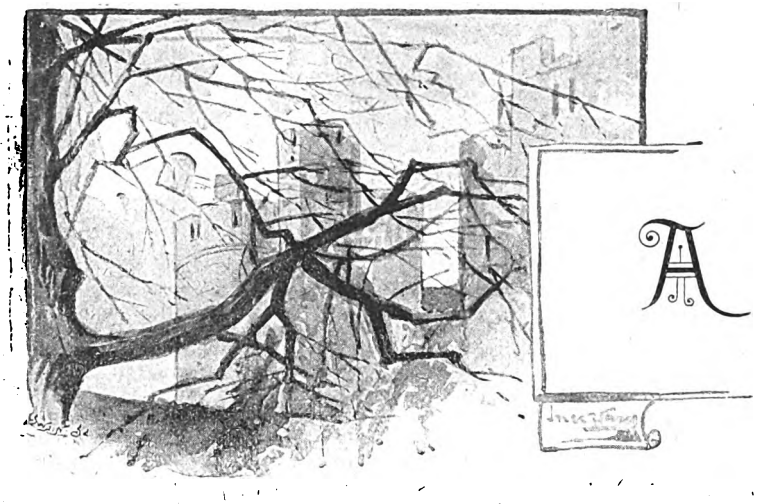

A Mirage of Midnight.

IT was nearly midnight; the ironing was done, and the clothes lay heaped on the table in snowy piles still hot from the iron. Ann Quinn drew a chair up to the little kitchen window that overlooked the river, and sat down with a sigh of pain, for her back ached. She rested her chin in her hand, and stared through the faint tracery of familiar objects on the glass to the water beyond, lying dark and glossy under the stars.

"I wonder if Miss Niles wants that minced meat for breakfast?" thought Ann Quinn, for she was both a cook and a laundress. "Perhaps I'd better fry them cold potatoes left from dinner, too," she continued, her eyes resting on a far-away cluster of electric lights that trembled like a diamond pendant.

Presently, as she sat there, the red rim of the moon pushed itself up behind some trees on the opposite shore. Ann Quinn watched it rising with a meditative look. "It's terrible red; them little branches looks like they were drawn on it with a pen. I wonder what that black thing in the water is?" she broke off, as a feeler of moonlight slipped across the river to where something black and long bobbed stiffly in the current.

She shaded her eyes from the lamp, and pressed her face close to the glass. "Looks like a man," she muttered. As she spoke, the thing wheeled about and began drifting in towards the stone breakwater beneath the window. Slowly it drew near, the little moon-sparks dancing in its wake. It floated into the shadow, and she strained her eyes in vain to follow it.

"Think I'll go to bed," she said, giving one more look into the darkness. She did not go though, for suddenly she saw a lean hand thrust over the breakwater, then another, and the next moment the figure of a man crawled out on to the stone below her.

Ann Quinn started back, her heart pumping like a steam-dredger, for she heard the thick splash of wet feet coming up the steps, and she saw a face pressed against the window that she had just quitted—a drawn face, yellow—pale as the handkerchief knotted about its throat.

"Let me in, Ann Quinn," said the lips, though she heard no voice. "Let me in."

She stood staring, her broad cheeks whiter than the plates on the dresser behind her, but she did not move. The man waited a moment, then he pushed the latch and swung himself into the room.

The lamp blinked and guttered in the draught, and a door slammed. Ann Quinn quivered from head to foot. The man stood staring at her with famished eyes.

"A lifetime, a whole lifetime," he whispered at last, and his voice sounded cold and empty as the echo in a vault.

"Go away," cried Ann Quinn, "and take your wet hand off my ironing."

The man moved, and stared at the piles of clothes on the table.

"Did you do that?" he asked in a low voice, "and are you tired?"

"Yes, I did, an' I am tired," she replied, stealing her way stealthily towards the door.

As she moved her terror lent a new, cat-like grace to her awkward body; she looked almost like another woman in the swaying light—a woman with narrow, wicked eyes and lithe motions. The man stepped quickly before the door and stood there, his clothes flooding the black river water on her clean floor.

"And all this time you have worked, while I have had more, a thousand times more, than I could use; and we have lived near each other, here in the same town, and never knew it!" He covered his face with his hands and groaned. Then he moved towards her, his arms outstretched: "My love, my lost love! give me one kiss, my first since the other grave closed over us!"

Ann Quinn gulped, and her anger was aroused. "If you touch me I'll kill you," she said hoarsely, catching a knife up from the shelf behind her. The man seemed not to hear her; he grasped her in his arms, and crushed his mouth on hers, and his lips were wet and cold.

Ann Quinn leapt away from him and buried the great knife in his heart. He looked into her terrified eyes, and a shadow fell on his face.

"See," he said mournfully, "you have stabbed me again, but this time it is too late."

She looked, and there was no blood gushing from the great slash, only the drip, drip, of the thick water. Then she covered her face and prayed, for she saw that the man was dead.

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There was a long silence, broken by the chime of a clock in the house behind them. The man shivered. "An hour more, dear God, only an hour more!" he pleaded, and he wrung his hands, crying hurriedly: "How can I say it all! how can I make her understand!" He seized Ann Quinn's arm and shook her fiercely.

"Remember, woman! Try to remember! Have I forgotten? Have I not lived alone—waiting—and you never came?"

She brushed her rough hand over her eyes; something stirred in her torpid brain. As the summer lightning, threading the sky, will show a sudden pearly perspective of unseen cloud-mass, then flash out, leaving the same blind night it found, so the soul of Ann Quinn opened for an instant, beyond her wretched work-ridden world, only to close again as quickly. The man caught her look, and asked, his voice tense and quivering:

"Those faded lilies-of-the-valley, there in that cup, why did you keep them only from the flowers you threw away this morning?"

"They—they—smelled good," answered the woman, troubled, bewildered.

"Only that?"

"Yes, only that."

"Have you never dreamed of some one you loved, some one apart from this miserable squalor I find you in?"

The blood flooded into her sallow face.

"What business is that of yours? Go away, I say!" she added weakly, giving him a push, and catching at the table to save herself from falling.

"Tell me," he pleaded, "have you never missed me, who was more to you those few short years ago than life?"

Ann Quinn looked into his eyes and laughed. There was no mirth in that laugh, though, and he shielded himself as though she had struck at him. Then he spoke again.

"Listen," he said. "To-night in a far land my soul will be born anew—until then the veil is lifted. But we will cheat God and Love and Law! You and I—together. Soon my eyes will be blinded and I shall not know you, except by this—take it and keep it always over your heart, and though you be old and bent, and though you be a little child, still I shall know you."

He thrust his hand into his breast and drew out a leather case. He opened it and pushed something towards her. She looked; it was a faded spray of lily-of-the-valley. Then he reached into his pocket and threw a canvas bag down on the table. "Take these," he said; "there is enough here to keep you from this drudgery," he pointed to the ironing; "and now I must be gone—the river calls me."

They stood looking at each other in silence. The light swam before Ann Quinn's eyes, and everything blurred but that white face staring into hers; nearer it came, ever nearer, and she felt her muscles quiver in resistance, then grow lax; there was a pause, a gasping breath, and she had thrown herself into his arms. The cold ooze from his wet hair trailed on her neck; closer and closer they swayed together, locked in each other's arms; then, with a strange thin cry, like the wail of a new-born child, the man tore himself away, and leapt from the window into the night beyond. There was a heavy splash, and silence.

The wind had blown out the lamp. Ann Quinn groped her way to the table, dazed and stupid. She struck a match; it sputtered and went out. Then she crawled away into a corner, her wide eyes fixed on the open window. The moon swam high, and the river ran molten silver beneath it. The little stars set, and the grey scroll of morning unrolled across the night. Still she sat there, her eyes fixed on the empty window-space.

Suddenly she stood up, and she felt old, and dizzy, and lame. She reached out and picked up the canvas bag the man had given her. She shook it, and there rolled out on the table a great handful of unset rubies. Ann Quinn stood staring at them until the first sunbeam came sifting through the darkness, lighting them into a thousand crimson sparkles.

There was a rap at the door, and she thrust the jewels from sight. It was only the milkman, and he looked at the woman's face in disappointment. "So you've heard the news already?" he asked.

"What news?"

"Why, didn't you know they've found the body of Ellis Price, the millionaire, drowned not a hundred yards from this very spot."

"No," said Ann Quinn.

"Yes, and they think he must have been murdered. He left home to go to the bank with some rubies he had for his niece's wedding, and they weren't on the body anywhere."

"Murdered—murdered? What would they do if they found someone with them rubies?" Ann Quinn asked thickly.

"Why, hang him high as he'd swing," answered the milkman.

Ten minutes later Ann Quinn stole down to the river-side. She reached over and dropped a handful of stones into the water—a handful of stones that shone like blood-drops. Down they sank into the grey river slime. But on the ripples above them hung something too light to sink, for it was only a dried stem of lilies-of-the-valley.

Ann Quinn watched it drift out of sight, then she turned back to the house to get breakfast.

Julie Kenly.

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I.

The Biddlestone Distillery was an old-established concern, founded by Herbert Carson's grandfather, who made a fortune, which his son spent. Dying, John Carson bequeathed the business, all he had to leave, to Herbert, who very soon discovered that it was necessary to take stock and place the books in the hands of a firm of accountants. He received their report, and at once called on his cousin, Kate Hemming, to whom he was engaged.

"I've got it," he said, as soon as the couple were alone. "The business is fifteen thousand to the bad. Drake and Smith tell me I must find capital to clear off the liabilities, or wind up—that is, break, smash, come to grief. They suggest a partner, but can't conscientiously recommend the concern to any client of theirs. A nice outlook, isn't it?"

Kate sighed. She was a very pretty girl, a brunette of the dashing type, and being particularly fond of "Handsome Bertie," as young Carson was popularly called, her sympathy could be counted upon.

"It is a very miserable one," she said mournfully. "Do you think you could induce anyone to invest?"

"I'm afraid it's impossible," he answered. "You see I've been going the pace almost as fast as the governor did. It's no use my saying I didn't know the distillery was in Queer Street, and promising to amend—selling my hunters and that sort of thing. It's true enough; but who would believe it?"

"A stranger might."

"A stranger with fifteen thousand to invest would employ a sharp solicitor to make inquiries. No. I've looked at it all round. It's a hopeless case."

"I am afraid it is," said Kate, after a thoughtful pause, "unless you can marry money quickly. If I had fifteen thousand, or fifteen hundred, you should have it. As I haven't, you'll have to marry money, Bertie." And she sighed again, very deeply.

"What do you mean?" he cried. "What about you?"

"Oh, I shouldn't die of a broken heart," she answered, with a dismal little laugh. "I'm very fond of you, Bertie, but I couldn't do that if I wanted to. It's plain we can't marry, so you had better try somewhere else before the crash comes."

He looked at her suspiciously. Having a very good opinion of himself, her apparently careless surrender of her own claims was not soothing to his *amour propre*.

"You are heartless!" he exclaimed rather angrily. "I don't understand you at all. What are you driving at?"

"I am not heartless," she answered, and her quivering eyelids and lips proved the assertion. "I should be glad to marry you to-morrow if either of us had any prospects. But if I did so under the present circumstances I should ruin you, and I won't do that if you fall on your knees. This is what I am driving at: Clara Lorimer has loved you in secret ever since she was a

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school-girl with confidants by the half-dozen. She has heaps of money. Go and try your luck."

It was news—amazing news. Herbert Carson immediately saw the way out of his difficulties. Miss Lorimer and he were very old friends. Recollections of tender glances and sighs, and words whose meaning was scarcely hidden, flashed to mind. Remembering, he knew that Kate was not deceiving him; but he loved his cousin as well as it was possible for such a man to love anyone, and although to save himself he would have sacrificed much, it was unnecessary to lose her good opinion by adopting her suggestion too eagerly.

"I can't do that," he rejoined in a half-hearted manner. "What would you think of me?"

"I," she answered with another mirthless laugh. "Oh, I should think you were a wiser man than your father."

John Carson had married for his second wife a penniless beauty whose extravagance had helped to wreck the family ship.

"But your own feelings?" Herbert went on.

"Oh, I should soon get over it. Don't think of me."

"I can't do it?" he repeated.

"Then," she rejoined, "you force me to set you free. I dare not marry you, Bertie. I should ruin a poor man in a month. Here is your ring." She took the jewelled circlet from her finger, and placed it in his hand. "Think what you like of me, but go and ask Clara Lorimer to marry you, and when you have got her and her money treat her well. It would break my heart to see you down at heel, hard up, living on your friends, Bertie, and I powerless to assist you. This is the only way I can help you. Now go—there's a good fellow."

He protested vehemently. Nevertheless, he went, conscious that he had played the martyr very well.

As soon as the door had closed behind him, Kate sat down and cried for ten minutes. Then she wiped away her tears with a dainty, lace-bordered handkerchief, effaced their traces with some mysterious preparation, and put her love-disappointment resolutely aside.

II.

Herbert Carson found Miss Lorimer at home, a plain-featured, rather dowdy girl of twenty-eight, no more like his brilliant cousin than a brown moth is like a "peacock" butterfly. But drowning men do not examine the lifebuoy thrown to their aid with a nice eye. Certainly he had no scruples strong enough to induce hesitation. More or less a flirt since his boyhood, Kate's beauty and sprightliness had kept him pretty constant at heart, but words meant little, and there were few girls of any standing in Biddlestone with whom "Handsome Bertie" had not, at one time or another, bandied soft nothings. With Clara Lorimer he was scarcely on less familiar terms than with Kate, his late *fiancée*, herself.

"Kate has thrown me over, Clara," he suddenly exclaimed, after a few commonplaces.

Surprised, Miss Lorimer rose from her chair, then sat down and tried to look regretful, in which she did not quite succeed. Herbert Carson, who was watching her narrowly, saw that he had only to speak.

"Yes," he went on, "it's a question of money. The governor has died poor, and the business is in a queer way. I shall have as much as I can do to keep going. I shall have to leave Oakvale, sell my horses, and climb down pretty considerably. I told Kate just how matters stood. You know the result."

He paused for a reply, which was not forthcoming immediately. Miss Lorimer was never quick at putting her thoughts into words.

"I am very sorry that you are in difficulties," she said at length, not, however, in a sorrowful tone. "I shouldn't grieve about Kate, though, if I were you. You ought to be glad that she has shown herself in her true colours. I should forget her and look for someone more worthy—more faithful," she added as an after reflection.

"I'm not going to grieve about her," he rejoined. "Judging by my feelings, I don't think I could have cared for her in the right way. But as for looking for someone else, how can a poor fellow on the verge of bankruptcy do that? What would you answer, for instance, if I came to you and said: 'Clara, I've been fond of you for years, but didn't know my own mind. I'm poor now, and in need of financial assistance. Will you marry me and help me?' That is the plain English of it," he went on, "and a nice cad I should feel if I did it."

Miss Lorimer blushed deeply. But it did not seem to strike her that Herbert Carson's artful speech was in fact a direct proposal.

"I shouldn't think it was caddish," she answered, hesitated a moment, then went on: "I know someone who would be only too glad to help you."

He knew perfectly well to whom she was alluding, but he was too cunning to show his cards at once.

"I wish I did," he rejoined, passing a white hand over his forehead. "I should be very grateful. Is it anyone I'm acquainted with? Is it a lady?"

"Yes; and you know her very well."

He sighed. And Miss Lorimer sighed in sympathy.

"That's just the difficulty," he went on. "A man can't accept assistance from a lady, unless he happens to love her, and she is willing to marry him. Ah! if it were only you, Clara, and you would marry me—but there's no such luck likely to come my way." Pausing, he allowed his hand to fall over and conceal his eyes.

Miss Lorimer blushed again, more deeply still.

"It is me!" she cried impulsively. "It isn't wrong to say so, is it?"

When, half an hour afterwards, Herbert Carson departed from Miss Lorimer's residence, he was once more an engaged man. And his *fiancée* was worth £25,000. He did not feel particularly jubilant about it. Clara was not Kate by a long shot. But he was satisfied that he had done a big day's work.

III.

The sudden transfer of "Handsome Bertie's" affections caused considerable talk in Biddlestone. As his financial straits forbade delay, the wedding was arranged to take place almost immediately. There was no difficulty with the creditors, however, after they were informed that the distillery would at once be put on a sound footing. Miss Lorimer had agreed to defray all existing liabilities. Consequently, Herbert Carson's mind was easy on that score; but he was not happy. Indeed, for the greater part of a day he was more than half inclined to cry off. It was after a visit from Dr. Bayntun, an old friend of his father's, who had been the Lorimer's medical attendant before Clara was born.

"So you are going to marry money, Bertie," he said. "I would congratulate you if I dared."

"What's the row?" was the natural, if slangy question.

"No row, my boy, but just a word of warning," rejoined the old doctor, who, as he had retired from

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Lying on the floor beside a broken decanter.

practice, could afford to be more out-spoken than the majority of medical men consider it expedient to be. "Drinking was never your father's failing," he went on, "nor is it yours. But I know your wine-cellar is pretty well stocked."

"Yes, it is," said Carson, wondering what was coming next.

"Well, keep it locked, and carry the key in your pocket—when you have taken your wife home."

Carson stared in amazement at the Doctor. "Good Heavens!" he cried. "Do you mean to say that Miss Lorimer drinks?"

But Dr. Bayntun had not quite forgotten the circumspection essential to success in his calling. He smiled blandly, but enigmatically.

"I have warned you. Her mother and her grandmother died of too much brandy, though it didn't appear in the death certificates. It's in the blood. Don't let it break out."

Having done what he considered to be his duty to his old friend's son, Dr. Bayntun went his way. But it would have required a much stronger warning to defer that hasty marriage, not to mention breaking it off altogether.

At the hour fixed the ceremony took place.

Among the numerous presents was a handsome one from Kate, a gold-mounted inkstand in the shape of an owl, doubtless typical of her old lover's wise and prudent conduct.

Mrs. Carson not only paid all the creditors, she provided capital to work the distillery with profit. Gratitude would have induced some men to simulate affection, even though they did not feel it; but Herbert Carson was not one of them. He was deeply aggrieved because, six months after his own marriage, Kate took it into her head to wed Mr. Lyons, a wealthy brewer, forty years her senior.

Then, when it was too late, he speedily discovered that Dr. Bayntun's warning was well grounded. Clara exhibited such a marked fondness for stimulants, that various kind friends declared she must have had the distillery in mind when she engaged herself to Herbert Carson. He locked up the wine cellar, as advised, and also put the cellarettes under lock and key, but whenever they quarrelled, which was not seldom, she contrived to obtain spirituous consolation.

One day, about eight months after their marriage, he found her intoxicated. In his rage he threw prudence overboard—declared that he did not care a straw for her and never had done; he had married her for her money, and the sooner she drank herself to death the better he would be pleased; the natural result of such treatment being that she gave way entirely to her inherited craving. What little good looks she had ever possessed speedily disappeared. Before she had been a wife a year she had become a slattern and a shrew. One after another her friends ceased to call. Her degradation was known to every soul in Biddlestone.

Her husband made no attempt to reclaim her. He was seldom at home. In horse-racing and other forms of gambling, Stock Exchange speculation, and the like, he sought and found consolation—losing heavily as a matter of course. His capital melted away. Debts accumulated. Two years after his marriage his financial position was almost as bad as when Kate suggested that means of escape.

At this juncture Mr. Lyons died after a brief illness, leaving the brewery and the bulk of his wealth to his widow. Carson's dealings with the deceased brewer had been very large, and he owed the estate a considerable sum of money. The executors pressed for payment. Unable to liquidate the debt, he wrote to his old flame, asking for time. Since her marriage he had scarcely seen her. By return of post he received an invitation to call. He went, of course.

The two years which had elapsed since their engagement was broken off had in no way dimmed Kate's beauty. If anything, she was more handsome. Widow's weeds suited her style. She handed Carson his account—receipted.

"I owe it to you," she said. "My conscience has reproached me terribly for sending you to Clara. But I didn't know she drank until Dr. Bayntun told me. How should I? Poor fellow! I can see how wretched you are, and I pity you. But I have often, since my marriage, pitied myself as well. What a coward I was! If I could live my life over again, Bertie, I would act differently. Why wasn't I brave enough to marry you and bear poverty with you? It was my plain duty, and I failed. But I have regretted it, Bertie; I regret it every day of my life. Why can't we have our chances twice?" There were tears in Kate's beautiful eyes; her words came with a sob.

Carson was deeply moved, but Kate little knew the awful thought which caused his agitation. He tore himself away, fearful lest he should betray his Satan-suggested desire.

"If I were free," he muttered, as he returned to his office at the distillery, "Kate would marry me. I should be the richest man in Biddlestone. If I were free! If I were free!" And then his thoughts took a more defined shape. "Be free? It's easy enough; the means lie ready to your hand."

Arrived at the distillery, he secretly filled a handbag with bottles of over-proof spirit. Then, having in-

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formed his head clerk that he must go to London that evening, he went home, carrying the bag. Watching for his opportunity, and finding it, he filled up the decanters in the cellarettes from the bottles he had brought from the distillery, and left them on the sideboard where his wife could not fail to see them. This done, he sought the wretched woman, and, deliberately picking a quarrel, abused her as never before. When even his ingenuity was exhausted, and he could find no more taunts to shower upon her, he struck her, and rushed away to catch the London express.

Early next morning a telegram from his head clerk arrived at his hotel.

"Your wife is dangerously ill. Can you return at once?"

Of course he could return, having no business to transact. When he reached Biddlestone his wife was dead. She had been found insensible in her room, lying on the floor beside a broken decanter—one of those which her husband had filled with over-proof spirit.

He insisted that an inquest should be held, notwithstanding that the murdered woman's medical attendant expressed his willingness to give a certificate. The jury found a verdict of death from "alcohol poisoning." No imputation rested upon the murderer. On the contrary the Coroner and the jurymen united in condoling with him. He had done everything he could to save the miserable woman he had been so unfortunate to marry. The testimony of the servants proved that wines and spirits had always been kept under lock and key, except on this unlucky occasion, when, having to leave hurriedly to catch a train, he had omitted to put the cellarettes where the deceased could not get at them.

Her relationship permitted Kate to call upon the widower.

Her relationship permitted Kate to call upon the widower before the funeral. She considered it her duty to do so, no suspicion that he had contributed even to Clara's death having entered her head. It is scarcely necessary to say that he did not so much as hint at his hopes. Indeed three months had passed before he ventured to do so.

"I shall be glad to marry you and try to make you happy," she answered. "I loved you when I sent you away, and I have never ceased to love you. But there must be no scandal. We must let a year go by before our engagement is announced. In the meantime we mustn't see much of each other."

He did not demur. The period of probation soon passed. Then the engagement was declared, and the marriage arranged to take place ten days before Christmas.

IV.

It was the eve of the wedding. Carson was working late at the distillery. There was a press of orders always at that season, and he wished to leave everything straight, so that he might enjoy his honeymoon free of business worries and communications.

All goods ordered were packed on the second floor, which was reached from the office and store-room by a steep flight of stairs, lit by an unprotected gas-jet near the bottom. The office-door opened into a kind of well, gained by two steps down, whence the stairs to the packing-room sprang.

Having occasion to visit the second floor, Carson followed a porter up the staircase. The man was carrying on his shoulder a six-gallon jar of brandy. He had nearly reached the top, his master being only a few steps behind, when the jar slipped and fell from his shoulder. It struck Carson, who reeled and fell with it. In the well at the foot of the stairs he lay insensible, with the fragments of the shattered jar, and the spirit, which, unable to run further, had formed a pool about him. But his insensibility could not have been of more than a moment's duration. In an instant the staircase was a roaring furnace. The gas had set the brandy alight. There was no escape. The clerks in the office heard the crash, but they were unable to open the door, for the wretched man's body lay against it. Unable to rise, he could only shriek and pray, while the brandy blazed around him.

His agonised cries brought the packing staff to the head of the stairs. They looked, but the sight was too horrible. The fire, which had caught the woodwork, beat them back. Shrieking louder than the doomed man below, they fled to save their own lives, for in that building, stored with inflammable spirit, a moment's delay might mean death. Carson was left to his awful fate. His cries soon ceased, but the brandy flamed until almost every vestige of the miserable man had been consumed.

The distillery was burned to the ground. A few calcined bones were all that was recovered of its late owner.

At the inquest which followed, the jury, with true, if unwitting prescience, declared that Herbert Carson died "by the Hand of God."

Kate's mourning was as rich and deep as her grief was sincere.

Ashmore Russan.

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THE WHITE HART.

I WAS born with the instincts of a true sportsman.

For a long time I was at a loss to know from what source had come my passion for guns and gunning. My father was anything but a connoisseur of deadly weapons, and my mother never knew the butt from the muzzle of a gun, and was equally afraid of each.

While I was a child, it amused my brothers to hear me discuss the merits of choke-bore shot guns and breechloading rifles; but when I grew to woman's estate this highly unfeminine taste displeased and even alarmed them. They were very proper young men, and did not relish the idea of a young lady sister who could take a snipe on the wing, or pierce the bull's-eye with a revolver at sixty paces. Dear boys, they feared, too, that such a propensity might seriously endanger my being settled in life.

They remonstrated, they scolded; they brought me the accounts of all the dreadful accidents that resulted from the use of firearms, and tried to extort from me a promise that I would never touch a gun again. I might have yielded had not an unfortunate circumstance occurred that made me deaf to all intreaties.

An uncle who had heard of my skill, and was queer and old-fashioned enough to admire it, sent me on my eighteenth birthday a handsome Winchester rifle which he had ordered to be made for me. From that day I ceased to struggle against fate. I felt that my life would never be complete until I had hunted the deer or tracked the grizzly in his mountain home.

The opportunity came. Some friends invited me to spend a few weeks at their home in the Sierra. They had a little house among the pines in one of the most romantic regions of the range.

A hunting party was formed for my especial entertainment, and the night before as a prelude to the morrow's excitement we listened around the fire to the wild stories of the mountaineers.

* * * * *

"Old Clubfoot," a grizzly who had been known in the region for fifteen or twenty years, was a favourite topic. No one had had the hardihood to attack him since he had pursued a hunter a long distance and killed him with a stroke of his gigantic paw. An enormous trap had once been set for him and he had caught his foot in it, but with wonderful intelligence he had gone to the nearest rock and beaten it off. He was seen occasionally in the passing years, and now and then he helped himself to a sheep or calf unmolested.

There was also a white doe among the neighbouring mountains which seemed to bear a charmed life, for many hunters had shot at it and always missed. A superstition had naturally grown up about it, and the mountaineers held that some great calamity would attend the person who killed the white deer.

These stories aroused my imagination so that I could scarcely wait for the dawn of day, and I lay awake long after the house was silent, but was the first one stirring in the morning.

An old hunter, whom we called Uncle John, was the leader of the party, and to his care I was assigned. He had always wished to see a woman shoot, he said, and I should have a grand chance to show what I could do.

"Don't kill the white deer," some one called after us.

"No, no," I laughed back; "we'll take the greatest care."

We rode in silence till we reached the crown of a little hill where there was an open, grassy spot. I was close beside Uncle John when I saw him gaze fixedly ahead for a moment. Then without turning his head he said in a whisper:

"Get down quick! Here's your chance! As fine a shot as ever I see."

I was down before he had fairly begun to speak, but trembling all over, and my teeth chattered in a most unaccountable way.

"Slip up behind that sugar pine an' blaze away," was the whispered order; and hugging my rifle I obeyed, all the time with that dreadful shaking. It was "buck ague," as I afterwards learnt, a nervous affection experienced by young hunters during their first shot at a deer, and even old hunters have suffered from it.

The beautiful creature, a two-year old buck, stood quietly feeding, outlined against the sky. I levelled my rifle, never noticing that I had not raised the hammer, and pulled with all my strength. It did not "go off." At last, discovering the reason, I righted the hammer with a click. The deer raised his lordly head, snuffed the air, and was gone in a series of magnificent leaps.

"How beautiful!" I cried, forgetting in the novelty of the sight my own stupidity, of which however I was not long to remain unmindful. The look of contempt that greeted me as I turned to Uncle John withered me.

"*You'll* never kill a deer! Never see such a chance since I was born; not ten yards off. Pooh!" And the irate old hunter rode off, leaving me to follow or go back as I chose.

I have been mortified several times in my recollection; have been "spelled down" as a child in school; have missed the target in archery tournaments, and have been snubbed by a prospective mother-in-law; but never do I remember that my pride was so lacerated as now. The sunshine suddenly lost its brightness, the fresh, fragrant stillness was no longer a delight, and desperate thoughts flashed through my brain of putting an end to my wretched existence.

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At last I determined that instead of returning home to brood over my sorrow I would strike off by myself into the woods and redeem my reputation by taking home at night some trophy of my skill.

The soothing sunshine and delicious air by degrees restored my equanimity, and hope was high in my bosom. I scanned all the ravines closely, and looked wisely on the ground for tracks of beasts. I rode long and far, and when the sun was high threw myself beside a little spring that bubbled from the rocks and ate my luncheon, allowing my horse to graze near me. On my right was a small patch of green herbage across which the tall pines cast a sombre shadow. I was too high for birds; they were below in the valleys, though now and then a vulture sailed majestically around some distant peak. The loneliness and silence of the place began to be oppressive.

Suddenly there was a rustle in the tall grass under the pines. Looking up I saw the head of a deer. I seized my rifle, and, levelling it, fired with a steady hand. A deafening report crashed through the stillness and there leapt into the air a white deer! I sprang to the place. In the bloodstained grass lay the noble animal struggling with death.

I felt a thrill of superstitious horror; something as an old Egyptian must have felt had he killed unwittingly the sacred ibis, or the Ancient Mariner when he slew the albatross. I tried to stanch the blood, but the murderous ball had done its work too well. Hardly knowing what I did I took the head of the dying creature in my lap. In the large soft eyes were reflected the rocks and the swaying pines. As the breath grew fainter the head turned with a convulsive movement and the fast glazing eyes looked into mine with a gaze so human in its intelligence that I was almost crazed with grief and terror. I hurried from the spot only to find that my horse, probably frightened by the rifle-shot, had disappeared. I was alone and miles from home.

I discovered, too, that I lacked one of the most necessary requisites of the true hunter—ability to find my way under all circumstances.

It was already afternoon. I started to go back on foot the way I had come as nearly as I could remember it. When I reached a point high enough to command a view I did not feel reassured, for the mountains looked all alike and range after range stretched away on every side silent and relentless as the tomb. There was not a living thing in sight but a buzzard circling about a far-off peak.

At last I set off in a direction where I thought I recognised familar rocks. The killing of the white hart weighed heavily upon my spirits and filled me with vague fears. The stories of the night before added to my uneasiness. There was the danger that I might meet a bear. I had my rifle and three dozen cartridges in my belt, but Uncle John had said: "Give grizzlies a wide berth."

What could I do if I met one?

The way grew more and more intricate. Now I had to climb over boulders, and now force my way through tangled undergrowth, from which I emerged into the shadow of pines so gloomy that twilight seemed suddenly to have fallen.

There was a crashing of bushes as of some heavy body pushing itself through. I tried to run, but the roughness of the ground made me stumble at every step.

The noise came nearer. I knew that it could be nothing but a bear, and every other anxiety was swallowed up in present terror. I remembered that grizzlies do not climb unless the tree is neither too large nor too small. Ten yards to the left stood a slender tree with trunk clear for fifteen feet.

I sprang towards it, and although I had never been able to climb a tree before I climbed now without a moment of hesitation and scrambled to a seat among the branches. I shook so violently that I had to hold on by main force to keep from falling. I had been there probably thirty seconds when there shuffled from the bushes with awkward but impressive gait a monstrous grizzly bear.

I had dropped my gun in the excitement, and even had I kept it I should not have dared to fire. As the great beast shambled along I saw that he was lame. It was old Clubfoot, the terror and autocrat of the mountains. He was heading directly for my tree. My blood curdled and my breath stopped. I have no distinct recollections of the next few seconds. He approached within ten feet of my hiding-place, rolling his heavy head from side to side as if aware of an unseen foe. Then he passed on and was lost among the trees.

I remained motionless for nearly an hour, fearing to descend. Then I crept noiselessly in the direction whence old Clubfoot had come. My rifle, which must have fallen against the prostrate trunk by which I found it, was broken off short at the breech, the bear having struck it with his paw in passing.

Imagine my surprise when I emerged from among the trees to find the same little grass plot where I had killed the deer. At first I could not believe it, but there was the spring with the rock by which I had sat, and the remains of my luncheon lay scattered on the ground. I was tired as well as weak and nervous after the fright the bear had given me. But it was becoming a question of life and death, and I was not willing to die. Carefully gathering the scraps of bread and meat that I had thrown away, I resolved to follow the nearest cañon down to its mouth, which I was sure would lead me out into the open country somewhere.

The sides were so steep that I had to let myself down by clinging to roots and overhanging branches. I plodded on doggedly. In the heart of the cañons unnumbered horrors lurked and the rocky walls rose on each side of me toweringly insurmountable. I began to wonder if I had better go back when I was startled to see open before me what seemed almost a bottomless pit. The declivity was probably not more than fifteen feet, but it looked very terrible to me. I could not leap that distance nor could I climb round the steep and slippery sides. A tall tree grew from the lower level, however, and by leaning far out I caught a branch and thus climbed down.

I felt certain that now I must be very near the valley floor. Behind me in the hollows of the cañon the shadows of evening were already lying. I had sprained my ankle in the descent—an injury that at any time would have disabled me, but now could not be allowed to impede my progress. I limped along, hoping and fully expecting to see at a turning not far off the valley before me, the green fields, and the dwellings of men.

How were my hopes mocked when I found instead a precipice fully sixty feet deep. With a cry of horror I drew back and wrung my hands in despair.

Had I been saved from the jaws of a savage beast only to die more terribly by starvation or to be dashed to pieces in a rocky chasm?

Nature had never seemed to me more pitiless.

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The stony walls had looked down to me in awful silence. The yawning precipice at my feet seemed waiting with a sickening expectancy.

Before this I had been afraid to speak aloud for fear of rousing some wild animal; but now I felt that I should be glad to hear or see anything with life even if it were a savage. I shouted myself hoarse, but only strange echoes answered me from the frowning woods.

The shadows grew deeper. I must do something—anything.

It occurred to me to make a rope of some of my clothing, and thus descend. It was the work of but a moment to take off my long stockings and tie them together, and then to add my scarf. All this made only four or five yards in length. I tore the skirt of my stout waterproof suit in strips, which I tied together, until I had what seemed enough. Then, fastening a stone to one end I crept to the edge and let the rope down to measure the distance. It still lacked a little. The deficiency was soon supplied from the sleeves of the jacket. The root of a pine afforded a convenient place for attaching the rope; and, having first tested every foot of it to make sure that it would bear my weight, I was ready to swing off.

Several times I looked over and my head grew dizzy. I decided to go backward to obviate that difficulty. Fearing my shoes would be an hindrance in my clinging to the rope, I pushed them over, together with my cartridge belt. Another instant of hesitation and heart-sinking and I was fairly off.

I reached the bottom sore and breathless, but safe. Another trial awaited me. In the gathering gloom I could not find my shoes, and the sharp stones cut my tender feet at every step. Moreover, I dreaded rattlesnakes, and listened with painful acuteness for the warning rattle. I did not hear anything, and soon lost that fear in my overpowering anxiety to reach some human habitation.

It grew dark so rapidly that I had to use my stick at every step, as a blind man does, to feel the way before me. Before I groped along many rods my guide gave me timely warning of a chasm. Feeling for a stone, I hurled it forward, and heard it strike far down below.

I could go no further—at least until daylight—so, drawing back a few feet, I sat down to wait. I was so weary that I fell immediately asleep. I was awakened by a rifle-shot, followed quickly by a second report, but they sounded a long way off.

I started up and tried to shout an answer, but my over-strained throat could make no noise except a hoarse croaking like a child with croup. I was sure the shots came from my friends searching for me.

In the pocket of my jacket were some matches that I had not before remembered. It was not a moment before I had scraped some dry leaves together and set fire to them. A number of cones had fallen from the pines above, and there was a mass of dry chaparral, so that I had no lack of fuel.

By the blaze I could see the nature of the place about me. I was standing on a platform much like the one I had descended. On one side was the sheer wall, on the other the precipice. I was hemmed in by prison walls.

I heaped on branches till the flames ran high and made a roaring sound. The whole cañon was illuminated, and the tall pines shook like spectres in the fantastic light.

A crackling noise at a little distance drew my attention; chaparral cones, the pines themselves were ablaze. I had set the cañon on fire. Dismay succeeded my short-lived gleam of hope. In front was the chasm, behind the fire. I was about two rods from the ledge, and the flames crept towards me. I moved forward.

This sudden and awful danger gave me a voice. I screamed wildly as the fire reached out long, adder-like tongues for me.

A voice above shouted to me.

"Quick, quick!" I cried, "or it's too late!"

The fire had driven me so near the edge that a step would have hurled me over. I felt the terrible calm that comes to one when hope is dead. I saw two snakes leap upward in the blaze and writhe about each other in agony.

"Catch this, and tie it under your arms," shouted a voice, and a rope fell at my feet.

I was saved; but never since have I cared for hunting. I was cured by the dying look of the white deer.

Richard Sibert.

An Idyll of the Slums.

Lummin Street is an unsavoury bye-way in the north of London. The people who exist in Lummin Street do unmentionable things and use untranslatable language. They are ugly and unclean, and there is no variety in their repulsiveness. They have not even grace enough to be picturesque in their squalor.

But romance is a hardy flower, ungrudging of its perfume. It grows oftenest near to toil-worn hands, and, when plucked, lives longest under greasy bodices; rarely dying, indeed, until the hearts on which it feeds, are cold. High above the weedy undergrowth of petty cares and sordid aims that clog the bosoms of the dwellers in the world's dark places it flourishes, tracing on the dull grey background of inconsequent lives golden schemes of colour, or healing with its balm of fragrance the scars that unkind memories have left; so that every heart is lighter for its burden.

Even the bruised heart of Mary-Mary was lighter; though the scarce unfolded bud of romance that made its home there in the days of her youth drooped often under the heavy sadness of her tears.

She was called "Mary-Mary" because her moral nature was akin to that of the heroine of a popular

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nursery rhyme. She was a heavy-jawed, dull-eyed girl with no graces of form or manner to recommend her to the notice of any man. Yet a man fell in love with her. She knew that he was in love with her because he passed her door so often and always said: "'Ullo, Mary-Mary" so shamefacedly.

He was a costermonger, young and prosperous. His name was Wall Masters. And there was that in his eyes which Mary-Mary could never see without thrilling and blushing. She knew that he was hers as well as she knew that she was his when he cared to claim her. But there was a great wall of diffidence between them.

One day Mary-Mary made a friend. The friend's name was Liz, and she was a cripple. She was a newcomer to the neighbourhood, and lived at the extreme top and back of the house adjoining that in which Mary-Mary lived. The two girls first met on the crazy "leads" abutting on the rear of the houses, under their windows. Thither they went every day to enjoy the smoky evening breezes. They would sit there and chat until it was dark.

Their friendship was a week old, when one night Mary-Mary took Liz into her confidence and told her all about Wall Masters. From motives that she could not have defined to herself, she suppressed his name. Liz listened eagerly.

"I'm so glad it's like that wi' you, too," she said.

Mary-Mary started. She was sitting in the shadow, against a great black stack of chimneys.

"I s'pose you think," said Liz, "thet a pore, crippled thing like me ain't no right to 'ave anyfink ter do wi' love?"

"No, Liz! I reckon you oughter be loved mor'n most gels, on 'count o' yer affliction, y' know," said Mary-Mary awkwardly.

"Ah!" said Liz wistfully. "But all the same you can't imagine a bloke carin' for me, can yer?"

"Yuss, I can. You've got sech a sweet face—so kind an' nice. I'm sure any feller might go a long way further and find a sight wus gel 'n you."

Liz smiled. "That's on'y wot yer say. But it's good o' yer to say it."

"Tell me abart 'im," said Mary-Mary.

"E's the nicest, str'ightest bloke in the world!"

"O' course."

"But 'e really is!"

"So's mine."

'Then there must be two on 'em, that's all."

'Wot's 'is name?"

"Wall Masters."

"W—what?"

"Wall Masters. Least, thet's wot 'e's called. 'Is real name's Walter."

"Walter!"

"Wot's your bloke's name? You never towld me."

"Never mind abart 'im. Tell me abart Wall fust. 'Is 'e—do 'e love yer much?"

Liz blinked her eyes and sniffed. "'E useter," she said. "But—but 'e's cooled off a bit lately. I arst 'im abart it a day or two ago, and 'e told me 'e's got 'is eye on another gel. I don't know who she is, but I'd like to limb 'er, I would. I towld 'im so, an' 'e seemed put out. 'P'r'aps she won't 'ave me,' 'e sez. 'I ain't arst 'er yet,' 'e sez. 'Wot'll yer do if she won't 'ave yer?' I sez. 'I'll marry you,' 'e sez."

"An' would yer 'ave 'im arter thet?"

"O' course I would! I'd do anyfink to get 'im. It's 'ard ter be made a makeshift of, but I don't care s'long as 'e don't gimme the chuck."

"I wouldn't put up with it," said Mary-Mary hoarsely.

"You're different," said Liz. "There's plenty o' chances fer you. An' p'r'aps yer ain't so gorn on yer bloke as I am on mine." She wiped her eyes. "It do seem 'ard," she whimpered. "I ain't got much ter make me 'appy, Gawd knows, an' nar it seems as if I'm ter lose 'im. I dunno wot I shall do. She's sure ter 'ave 'im. Nobody couldn't 'elp likin' Wall. I alw's knoo 'e was too good fer me."

She bowed her face on her hands and wept. Mary-Mary, with her fingers interlaced in her lap, sat motionless in the shadow of the stack. Presently Liz looked up.

"You wouldn't b'lieve 'ow I've cried abart it," she said. "Every night I lay athinking of 'im. I on'y some ter live 'ere so as ter be nearer 'im. But 'e's on'y been to see me once since I came. An' 'e useter come every day!"

Mary-Mary shifted restlessly on her seat.

"I shouldn't worry abart it if I was you," she said.

"I can't 'elp it. You don't know wot 'e is ter me. O' it do seem 'ard!"

Mary-Mary rose unsteadily and went and laid her hand on Liz's head.

"I'm goin' in nar," she said.

"Goin' in!"

"Yuss."

"Wot for?"

"I've got a bit of a 'eadache."

"But it's cooler out 'ere. It'll git wuss if you go indoors. An' yer ain't told me abart your bloke yet."

"I'll tell yer some other night, not nar."

She kissed Liz on the forehead and climbed into her room and pulled down the window. She dropped on her bed and lay looking at the dirty ceiling with wide eyes. Her hand was pressed hard on her bosom and she breathed heavily.

For more than an hour she lay there. Then she rose and dressed her hair and put on her best frock. She went down to the street door and stood there waiting. She knew that Wall would pass by soon, and she wanted to see him.

He came at last. "'Ullo, Mary-Mary," he said. "'Ow goes it?"

She tossed her head. "Never you mind, Mister Masters," she said. "Yer a sight too free, it seems ter me."

He stared at her blankly.

"Wot's up?" he cried. "I ain't done nothink, 'ave I?"

"P'raps not. But my—my bloke——"

"Your bloke, I didn't know you'd got a bloke."

"Didn't yer! Well, I 'ave. An' 'e sez if yer come prowling around me any more 'e'll put the kybosh on yer quick. So you'd better chuck it."

And she went in and shut the door on him.

Edwin Pugh.

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Legends of Wolfville.

By "Dan Quinn."

Wolfville is a Cattleman's Settlement in Arizona, and the Characters in these Legends are Cowboys.

No. 6.—Why Navajo Joe was Set Free.

Navajo Joe was out of luck. Ordinarily his vagaries are not regarded in Wolfville. His frequent appearance in its single street in a voluntary of nice feats of horsemanship, coupled with an exhibition of pistol shooting in which old tomato cans and beer bottles perform as targets, has hitherto cited no more baleful sentiment in the Wolfville bosom than disgust.

"Shootin' up the town a whole lot" is the name for this singular pastime as given by Navajo Joe, and up to date the exercise has passed unchallenged.

But to-day it is different. Camps, like individuals, have moods—now light, now dark—and so it is with Wolfville. At this time Wolfville is experiencing a wave of virtue. This may have come spontaneously from those seeds of order which, after all, dwell sturdily in the Wolfville breast. It may have been excited by the presence of a pale party of Eastern tourists just now abiding at the O.K. Hotel; gentlemen whom the rather sanguine sentiment of Wolfville credits with meditating an investment of treasure in her rocks and rills. But whatever the reason Wolfville virtue is certainly aroused—a condition of the public mind which makes it a bad day for Navajo Joe.

The angry sun smites hotly in the deserted causeway of Wolfville. The public is within doors. The Red Light saloon is thriving mightily. Those games known to the world as monte, high ball and faro, and which generally engross public thought, are drowsy and dull enough; but the counter whereat the citizen of Wolfville gathers with his peers in absorption of the incautious compounds of the place is fairly sloppy from excess of trade. Notwithstanding the torrid heat this need not sound strangely; Wolfville learning is strongly homeopathic. Wolfville, when it is blazing hot, drinks whiskey.

But to-day there is further reason for this consumption. Wolfville is excited, and this provokes a thirst. Navajo Joe rendering himself prisoner to Jack Moore, rescue or no rescue, has by order of that sagacious body been conveyed by his captor before the Vigilance Committee and is to be tried for his life.

What was Navajo Joe's immediate crime? Certainly not a grave one. Ten days before it would hardly have earned a comment; but to-day, in its spasm of virtue, and sensitive in its memories of the erratic courses of Navajo Joe aforetime, Wolfville has gravely and grimly taken possession of that volatile gentleman for punishment. He has killed a Chinaman. It happened thus:

"Yere comes that prairie dog, Navajo Joe, all spraddled out," says Dave Tutt. He is peering from the window of the Red Light, to which he has been drawn by the noise of hoofs. There is a sense of injury disclosed in the tone born of the awakened virtue of Wolfville.

"It looks like this camp can assoom no airs," remarks Cherokee Hall in a distempered way, "but this yere miser'ble Joe comes chargin' up to queer it."

As he spoke that offending personage, unconscious of the great change in Wolfville morals, sweeps up the street, expressing gladsome and ecstatic whoops and whirling his pistol on his forefinger like a wheel of light. One of the tourists stands in the door of the hotel, smoking a pipe in short, brief puffs of astonishment, and reviews the amazing performance. Navajo Joe at once and abruptly halts. Gazing for a disgruntled moment on the man from the East, he takes the pipe from its owner's horrified mouth and places it in his own.

"Smokin' of pipes," he vouchsafes in condemnatory explanation, "is unelegant and degradin', an' don't you do it no more in my presence. I'm mighty sensitive that way about pipes, an' I don't aim to tolerate 'em none whatever."

This solution of his motives seems entirely satisfactory to Navajo Joe. He sits puffing and gazing at the tourist, while the latter stands dumbly staring, with a morsel of the ravished meerschaum still between his lips. What further might have followed in the way of oratory or over-acts may not be stated, for the thoughts of the guileless Joe suddenly receive a new direction. A Chinaman voluminously robed emerges from the New York Store whither he has been taken by dint of soap.

"Whatever is this Mogul doin' in camp, I'd like to know?" inquires Navajo Joe disdainfully. "I shore leaves orders when I'm here last for the immejit removal of all sech. I wouldn't mind it, but with strangers visitin' us this way it plumb mortifies me to death."

"Oh, well," he continues in tones of weary and bitter reflection, "I'm the only public-sperited man in this yere outfit so all reforms falls nacheral to me. Still, I plays my hand. I'm simply a pore, lone white man; but jest the same I makes an example of this specimen to let 'em know whatever a white man is, anyhow."

Then comes the short, emphatic utterance of a six-shooter. A puff of smoke vanishes quickly in the hot air, and the next census will be short one Asiatic.

In a moment arrives a brief order from Enright, the

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chief of the Vigilance Committee, to Jack Moore. That gentleman proffers a Winchester and a request to surrender simultaneously, and Navajo Joe, realising his fate, at once accedes.

"Of course, gents," says Enright apologetically, as he convenes the committee in the New York Store, "I don't say that Joe is held for beefing the Chinaman sole and alone. The fact is he's been having a mighty sight too gay a time of late, an' so I thinks it's a good, safe play, bein' as it's a hot day an' we has the time, to sorter call the committee together an' ask it's views, whether we better hang this yere Navajo Joe yet or not?"

"Mr. President," responds Dave Tutt, "if I'm in order an' to get the sense of the meetin' to flowin' easy and smooth, I moves we takes this Navajo Joe an' proceeds to stretch his neck. I ain't basin' this yere on no defunct Chinaman, nor nothin' in partic'lar, but lettin' her slide under the general head of being adapted to public good."

"Do I hear any remarks?" asks Enright, "if not I takes Mr. Tutt's very excellent motion as the census of this meetin', and it's hang she is."

"Not intendin' of no interruptin'," remarks Texas Thompson, "I wants to say this: I'm a quiet man myse'f, an' nacheral aims to keep Wolfville a quiet place likewise. For which all I shorely favours a-hangin' of Joe. He's given us a heap of trouble. Like Tutt, I don't make no pint on the Chinaman; we spares him too easy. But this Joe is allers a-ridin' an' a-yellin' an' a-shootin' up the camp till I'm plumb tired out. So I says, let's hang him, an' suggest as a eligible nook thar for the windmill back of the dance hall."

"Yes," says Enright, "the windmill is upholstered for sech plays, an' as delays is aggravatin', the committee might as well canter over right now an' get this off its mind."

"See yere, Mr. President," interrupts Navajo Joe in a tone of one ill-used, "what for a deal is this, I rises to ask, anyhow?"

"You can gamble this as a square American deal," replies Enright confidently. "You're entitled to your say when the committee is done. Jest figure out what cards you needs an' we deals to you in a minute."

"I solely wants to know if I'm in on this ye're play, that's all," retorts Navajo Joe.

"Gents," said Doc Peets, who has sat silently listening, "I'm with you on this hanging. These Eastern sharps is here in our midst. It'll impress 'em that Wolfville means business, an' is a good, safe, quiet place. They'll carry reports East as will do us credit, an' thar you be. As to the propriety of stringin' Joe, little need be said. If the Chinaman ain't good enough, if assaultin' of a innocent tenderfoot ain't enough, you can bet he's done plenty besides as merits a lariat. He wouldn't deny it himse'f if you asks him."

There is a silence succeeding the rather spirited address of Doc Peets, on whose judgment Wolfville has been taught to lean. At last Enright breaks it by inquiring of Navajo Joe if he has anything to offer.

"I reckon it's your play now, Navajo," he says, "so come a-runnin'."

"Why," urges Navajo Joe disgustedly, "these proceedin's make me sick. I shore objects to this hangin'; an' all for a measly Chinaman, too. This yere Wolfville outfit is gettin' a mighty sight too stylish for me. It's growin' that perdadbinged tic'lor it can't take its reg'ler drinks, an'——"

"Stop right thar," says Enright with dignity, rapping a shoebox with his sixshooter. "Don't you cuss the Chair none, 'cause the Chair won't have it. It's parliamentary law if anyone cusses the Chair he's out of order, same as it's law that all chips on the floor goes to the house. When a man's out of order once, that settles it, he can't talk no more that meetin'. Seein' we're aimin' to hang you, we won't claim nothin' on you this time, but be careful how you comes trackin' 'round agin, an' don't fret us. You sabe? Don't go an' fret us none."

"I won't fret you," retorts Navajo Joe. "I don't have to fret you. What I says is this: I s'pose I sees fifty men stretched by committees between yere and The Dallas, an' I never knows a man who's roped yet on account of no Chinaman. An' I offers a side bet of a hundred even it ain't law to hang people on account of downin' no Chinaman. But you all seems sot on this, an' so I tells you what I'll do. I'm a plain man, an' there's no filigree work on me, an' if it's all congenial to the gents here assembled—r.ot puttin' it on the grounds of no miserable author of a laundry, but jest to meet public sentiment half way—I'll gamble my life, hang or no hang, on the first ace turned from the box, Cherokee deal. Does it go?"

Wolfville tastes are *bizarre*. A proposition original and new finds in its very novelty an argument for Wolfville favour. It befalls, therefore, that the unusual offer of Navajo Joe to stake his life on a turn at faro is approvingly criticised. The general disposition agrees to it, and even the resolute Enright sees no good reason to object.

"Navajo Joe," says Enright, "we don't have to take this chance, an' it's a-makin' of a bad precedent as may tangle us hereafter, but Wolfville goes you this time. Cherokee, turn the cards for the ace."

"Turn square," remarks Navajo Joe, with an air of interest. "You wouldn't go to sand no deck nor deal thick an' thin agin perishin' flesh an' blood, would you?"

"I should shore say no," replies Cherokee. "I wouldn't do it for money, an' you can bet I don't do it none when the epeesode comes under the head of relaxation."

"Which, the same bein' satisfactory," says Navajo Joe, "roll your game. I plays it open."

"I dunno," observes Dan Boggs, meditatively caressing his chin, "but I'm thinkin' I'd a-coppered."

The turn proceeded in silence, and, as may readily happen in that interesting device called faro, a split falls out. Two aces come together.

"Ace lose, ace win," says Cherokee, pausing. "Whatever be we goin' to do now, I'd like to know?"

"Gents," announces Enright with dignity, "a split like this yere creates a doubt, an' it's law that doubts goes to the prisoner, same as a bull goes to the first man as ties it down an' runs his brand on to it. This camp of Wolfville abides by the law, and Navajo Joe goes free. However, he should remember this little graze and restrain his methods hereafter. Some of them ways of his is sooicidal, to say the least, an' if he's wise he alters his system from now on."

"So the camp really lose, and this yere person, Joe, goes free?" says Jack Moore dejectedly. "I allers was agin faro as a game; where we all misses it agregrious is, we don't play him freeze-out."

"Do you know, Cherokee," whispers Faro Nell, as her eyes turn softly to that personage of the deal box, "I'd sooner he goes loose than have two bonnets from Tucson." And Cherokee Hall pinches her cheek with a delicate accuracy born of his profession and smiles approval.

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A WHEEL TRAGEDY

"Are you tired?"

"No."

The bright flush on her cheek glowed rosily; there were no signs of fatigue in her eye.

"Glorious spot this," panted the man, as they reached the summit of a hill, "but hard work up the incline."

He was just behind her.

"Halt!" she cried merrily, springing off her bicycle as she held up a warning hand.

"This is too beautiful to pass, we must stop and gaze down on to the world below."

She leant against her machine and surveyed the scene.

He laid his iron steed gently on the soft grass and came close beside her.

"What do you see?" he asked.

"A beautiful earth," she replied, "all peace and plenty."

"Deceptive as everything; nothing is what it appears! Poor earth! what tales you could tell!"

He pointed to the distant villages with a scornful shrug of his manly shoulders.

"What a wonderfully smooth path that is—straight down the hill into the blue lake beneath," she said, her strange eyes following its descent. "We might walk down and dip our hands into the cool water, but it would be such a long way up again."

"The lake is very deep just there. I have read of this place in guide-books, it is called 'The Right Road to Death.'"

"If you ran in the darkness—yes."

The flush died from her face.

"It was not a bad idea of mine," he said, "a honeymoon on 'wheels.'"

"No, indeed."

"A three weeks' spin."

"Only so long? I think a month."

"No, count back. We were married on the——"

She wheeled her machine to a bank with an indifferent shrug of her shoulders, touching the metal lovingly.

"A good compensation for a honeymoon!" she whispered to the unanswering machine.

He followed, and sat beside her on the green slope.

"It is three weeks and two days."

"Really?"

"Yes, why that indifferent tone?'

"Oh! I am so stiff."

"Yet you flew along apparently without an effort! No, things are not what they seem."

"Have you ever heard of the beautiful, bright sulphur-coloured rose?" she asked.

"No."

"It grows in Australia. A lovely flower, but when you pick it to feast on its delights, lo! and behold, a dreadful odour as of decayed fruit."

"We have been married some time," said the man; "our honeymoon is nearly over. Don't you think it is time we discovered our decayed fruit? You spoke once of confessions being made with safety after the fatal knot is tied. If I show up my weak side, will you uncloak yours?"

"Why take it for granted I have one?"

"You are a woman," he replied.

A sudden light flashed in her eyes.

"You are right, it is a compact!"

"To begin with," he said, staring into space, "ideals are all humbug. There is nothing really beautiful in life. It only appears so."

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"Yes," from the woman doubtfully.

"Marriage is only a prosaic routine, after—after three weeks."

"Y—es."

"You think I am a very rising clever man, but it's all nonsense. I talk big because it pays. I stuff the people up, don't you know; they swallow it easily, a crowd always gapes. You can put anything into open mouths."

"I gaped," she vouchsafed thoughtfully.

"*You did*," laughing.

"Don't; it hurts."

Pain is greatly imagination—that sort of pain."

I told you my father was a country squire."

She nodded aimlessly.

"Well, he wasn't. He failed as a tradesman, and died two years ago in gaol."

She bit her lips,

"You lied to me, then."

"I often do," speaking lightly; "don't you ever?"

"Yes," sitting upright, and drawing away from him.

"I say—really—do you mean that?"

She pushed her hat off her rich red hair. He did not like the weird new glitter in her eyes.

"Yes, did you ever wonder why I ran away with you when I had a big house and money?"

"I thought—you—loved me!" he stammered.

"*You*—you were mistaken, who believe in nothing. What of ideals?"

He bit his lip.

"Go on," he hissed.

"I married for freedom—I escaped my tormentors!"

"Your people were kindness itself."

"You saw them at a distance. But the secret that we bury in the bosom of our home is kept from the world, which is not, you see, what it appears! There is a hereditary curse upon us, and I—it is believed—am tainted! The germs are in me, so they say," rising with a mocking laugh. "In a year it may break out, or at any moment," her voice rising with excitement. "I was to be sent to a big white house with iron bars before the windows. Think of it," clutching the handles of her machine, "but this has saved me—this wheel and a man. What a strange combination?" showing her white teeth.

The man looked at her, his face horribly changed.

"Is this a ghastly joke?"

She shook her head.

"Madness!" he muttered under his breath.

The woman started back with a shrill cry. She put her hand to her forehead as if trying to collect her scattered thoughts, and remember what she had said.

"*I told you that?*"

Her voice sent an icy chill through his veins.

"Not exactly. But the curse—tell me for mercy's sake—what is the curse?"

"If it were madness?" she cried, "what then?"

"You had better be at the bottom of the lake," said he.

The sight of the gradually sloping path—growing steeper at the foot—met her fevered gaze.

The wheels were spinning round, she was whirling away towards "The Right Road to Death."

A shout from the man—a wild, triumphant laugh from the woman—ringing with mad mirth!

Then the dizzy sight of the flying red hair, afloat on the wind, the bicycle going at break-neck speed down that dizzy descent, on—on—like a hideous dream, with the blue water ever before her bloodshot eyes, the rushing air on her face, and confused thought in her brain.

Nearer the calm, sweet lake that fearful vision sped, till the terrible climax was reached: a sudden opening of the water, then stillness and peace, the singing of birds, and sound of distant sheep bells.

The lake lay like a sleeping child at the foot of the hill. Could any ghastly secret disturb its endless rest?

W. G.

"Madness!" he muttered, under his breath.

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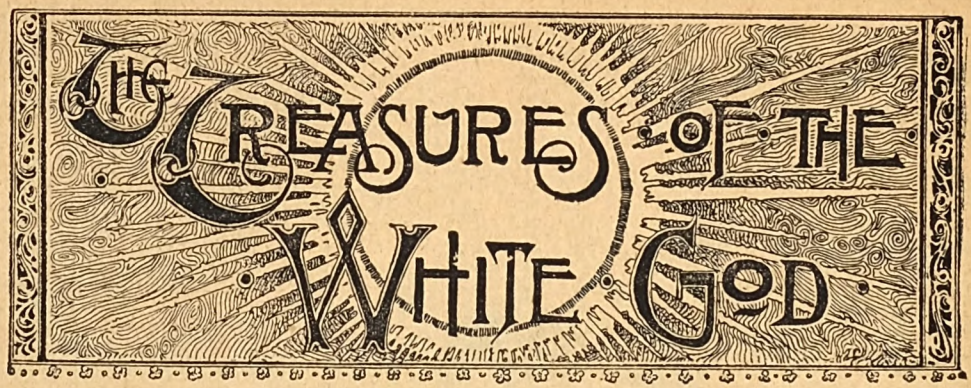

The Story of a Shameful Crime.

CHAPTER XX.

What the Letters Told.

"Impossible! incredible!"—what?

So crushed and depressed was the author of that mystifying sentiment, that it is doubtful if he could have coherently answered the proposition at that moment of intense emotion.

But the papers told. Yes, the documents in his faltering grasp were the cause of all Adrian Burgoyne's strange perturbation, and they could reveal the marvellous discovery his visit to the merchant's house had brought about.

They were three in number—two letters and a newspaper clipping. From the mass of documents littering the desk of Richard Sheldon the pretended physician had selected these, as most closely and vitally bearing upon the case in hand.

Like augmentative disclosures, they had been brought to light consecutively, and in their true, systematic order, and they comprised revelations beginning with a hint, interlarded with a startling, tangible announcement, and terminating in a climax that might well thrill the astounded Burgoyne to mingled wonder, dread and alarm.

They told a story plainly, coherently; they comprised a chronicle, intelligible, illuminating. They may repeat it here far more tangible and clearly than detailed description.

The first of the documents was a hurried scrawl.

It was addressed to Richard Sheldon, and it was signed by Colonel Lytle, two weeks back:

"You have insisted that the girl, Beatrice Ringold, is as innocent and ignorant of our schemes of the cipher alphabet as she pretends to be. I believe so, too, now.

"I have carried out your directions regarding her. She can never injure or unmask us. Why should we injure her? So I have found a new guardian for her, a lady living in the suburbs who operates an asylum for the mildly insane, on a small scale, and in a private way. Here she will be well practically under close surveillance, so that she cannot escape or write to a lover or friends if she would. Here she will remain until our scheme has been carried through—say, in the next two months. Then, I agree with you, that the graceful, generous thing to do with her is to set her adrift, with a couple of thousand, and enjoy the fortune we shall surely soon secure, with no fear of any future trouble from her.

"For the fortune is surely ours! This very day I have found a man, a master of fencing and the fistic art, formerly a native of Mexico. He informs me that the symbols contained in the parchment message that Detective Dean found in Burgoyne's bed are part of a system of sign-writing quite common in Mexico. It is now in his hands. I expect a translation of the same to-morrow."

The parchment message found in Burgoyne's bed! Ah! how that announcement unnerved the pretended doctor! How readily it explained the motive of Colonel Lytle in visiting Patrice—his frantic anxiety for the possession of the cipher alphabet key contained in the Bible cover! She had been right—they had found the lost parchment message, and the startled and appalled Burgoyne could now readily see how.

Patrice was safe. Virtually a prisoner, she would still be treated kindly. The relief experienced by Burgoyne at this discovery allowed his mind to dwell solely upon the other issues of the case in hand.

The second letter was also from Lytle, but it was dated a week later.

"The fortune is ours!" it announced jubilantly.

"To-morrow I will see you personally, and give details, and only write to assuage your natural anxiety. My main trouble has been to blind the Mexican fencing-master so he would get no inkling of the true value of the treasure, or a hint of our plans, and I have given him the parchment message in sections, and blindfolded and hoodwinked him into translating a character at a time, so that by no possibility can he patch it up in its entirety for his own enlightenment or use.

"Here is the entire translation, verbatim."

And here followed, word for word, line for line, sentence for sentence, the exact, the identical translation that Adrian Burgoyne had made of Ralph Ringold's secret, two weeks previous.

"From this you will readily discern," went on Lytle's letter, "that I must go at once to Mexico, to Guayli, to the cave of Bureldo. I have made definite inquiries regarding the place. It is only accessible through petty provinces, torn and distracted with internecine strife. Riot, insurrection, and bloodshed are rife. It is worth a man's life to venture alone in the district.

"Worse than that; once I arrive, the Aztec devotees will resist any encroachment on their territory, and will cer-

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tainly baffle any attempt to remove their most honoured shrine of worship, the oldest idol in Mexico—the ancient, revered object of their superstitious regard—the White God.

"After learning all this, I formulated a prompt plan of procedure. Strategy must be called to our aid. Money and influence must abet our scheme. Observe how finely I work it!

"You must go to the officials of the great Columbian Exposition—the World's Fair. You must represent to them that, as a public-spirited citizen and a lover of the fine arts, you wish to contribute an unique and valuable addition to their exhibits.

"What you propose to do is to send a trusty agent, myself, to Mexico, to gather curiosities and rare paintings. Further than that, I am to make photographs of the relics contained in the great cave of Bureldo, and, if possible, purchase the famous White God, or secure its use for exhibition at the Exposition. They sanction this arrangement, they provide you with letters to the Mexican authorities that will insure me a safe journey through governmental territory. From the Mexican consul in Chicago you also get a strong letter to the monks of the San Miguel Monastery; they will aid me in my plans; their friendly influence will enable me to visit the Aztec cave. I will photograph the idols, and, some fine night, the famous White God is missing. Presto—change! We scurry away with it, we rip it open. Treasure, fortune—a million! The great philanthropist and art collector, Richard Sheldon, Esq., donates a wonderful curio to humanity, and we have scored a triumph, under the guise of a public-spirited generosity.

"This is my plan. You provide the letters, the sanction of the World's Fair, so as to give glamour, a motive and security, to my visit to Mexico. You furnish the influence and the cash; I will hire my assistants, and I pledge you that I will, within two months from date, place in your possession Ralph Ringold's hidden fortune and the famous White God."

What a scheme! what bold plotting! Adrian Burgoyne's brain reeled as he read the letter.

But it was the third discovery he had made in Richard Sheldon's desk that set the coping-stone to the entire structure of fraud.

This was a fresh newspaper clipping, a day or two old, and it read:

A Valuable Contribution.—Richard Sheldon, Esq., a public-spirited merchant of Manchester, has dispatched to Mexico a commission authorised to secure a complete collection of Aztec curiosities. No pains or expense will be spared to secure for the great World's Fair the rarest treasures of a country rich in mementoes of legendary lore. Colonel Lytle, Mr. Sheldon's authorised agent in the enterprise, left for his tour of exploration on the Southern express last evening.

That was the chronicle complete! No need of further detail—no deed to ascertain if Richard Sheldon had gone with his ally and accomplice a part of the way, or, at some fashionable resort, was resting, and awaiting the materialisation of his fond hopes. No time trying to seek Patrice! No use unmasking these plotters to the public!

No; everything—all motives, all energies—must centre on one theme, vital, essential, important——

THE WHITE GOD!

Within its lifeless embrace, behind its baleful mask of stone, reposed the hidden fortune of dead Ralph Ringold.

Once possessed by the schemers, divided, dissipated, Patrice was a beggar.

Lytle had gone for it. Lytle, backed by money and influence, would find priest, fanatic and people ready to give him a warm welcome.

He, Adrian Burgoyne, poor, obscure, a week in the rear, had just eight shillings in cash to pit against the thousands of his rivals in the quest.

Two men sought the treasure! two men knew the secret of its hiding-place.

It was only a question of who could reach it first.

The shock of defeat, dread and dismay began to fade from Burgoyne's face as he reflected over all this.

He sprang to his feet suddenly; his eyes flashed resolutely.

"Somewhere," he spoke solemnly, "Patrice Ringold is thinking of me, praying for me; somewhere along the long road of fraud, cruelty and wrong, a pitfall lies in wait for these iniquitous plotters; somehow I shall yet succeed in my single-handed fight against evil and duplicity. Heaven give me strength in my hour of need! For, failure or triumph, life or death, I start for Mexico and the White God this very hour!"

CHAPTER XXI.

On the Trail.

A tempest of autumn rain was sweeping the street as a lone form sped from the rear of one of the great termini of the Garden City, and made his way rapidly down the bewildering net-work of railway lines, and along the sheltering avenues formed by long lines of trucks.

It was nearly midnight—midnight of the fateful day when Adrian Burgoyne had so fortuitously discovered the plans of his enemies, and it was Adrian Burgoyne himself who now threaded the maze of the station yards, taking the initial step in an enterprise, having its motive the baffling of Colonel Lytle's subtle plans.

"That is it," he murmured, pausing suddenly, and he halted near a luggage car, about the centre of a long train, with engine and red-lantern attached, all ready to start forth on its midnight journey.

Inquiry and investigation had led to his fixing upon this train an hour previous. The discovery that it was ticketed for a point in Texas at the very terminus of a line running nearly to the Mexican border, settled in Adrian Burgoyne's mind the question of transportation. He had determined to get to Mexico, to Guayli, as soon as possible. Without money to purchase a ticket, with no means of readily earning the same, realising that every passing hour was bringing his enemy, Colonel Lytle, nearer and nearer to the cave of Bureldo, to the White God and the precious treasure held within its keeping, he decided to improve the first opportunity that offered to help him on the course pursued by Lytle.

He had been over the route twice before, and was familiar with it. Once arrived at the Mexican border, the rest was simple. Acquainted with the language and ways of the people knowing the topography of the country thoroughly, he would possess a decided advantage over a man entering a strange district for the first time.

Lytle would proceed leisurely and with caution. His semi-official character, as an agent of the World's Fair, would involve considerable red tape; he would waste time cajoling the authorities, making friends with the priests at the San Miguel monastery. Burgoyne planned more speedy progress for himself, once safe on the Mexican soil.

In five days, a week at the most, he had calculated the train would reach the terminus of the line. He had now a little package which represented the last penny he possessed in the world, and it contained food for his journey. The side doors of the vans were doubly locked and sealed, but at one end a little window stood open, and through this, with difficulty he climbed.

Half-way, he started and hurried his progress, for approaching voices warned him. It would not do to be discovered by any of the employés. That would mean a prompt eviction, a further delay. He struggled through the aperture, but in his precipitation the parcel of food slipped from under his coat, where he had stowed it, struck the footboard, and fell between the lines.

The voices were now directly at the side of the truck. Concealment was imperative. He dropped inside on his

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hands, landed on a heap of boxes, and crouched, gasping for breath after his rapid exercise, and listened intently.

"When they pass on, I can recover the parcel," he planned.

Alas! the outsiders had halted. He heard the padlock on the door jangle as one of the intruders tried it.

"All safe?" queried a sharp voice.

"O K."

"Through?"

"Yes."

"See if the ventilating window at the end is all right."

Burgoyne thrilled as a form jumped to the footboard, and a dim outline was revealed against the very aperture he had just penetrated.

"Open," was the terse report.

"Shut and lock it."

Slam—snap! The watcher's heart stood still. A barred wooden grating was dragged across the only avenue of exit from the truck hitherto open to him. He was a prisoner. He could not now reach the lost bundle of food. To all intents and purposes, Adrian Burgoyne was shut in perforce to a long, gloomy journey, with the boxes and bales about him, unless he promptly revealed the fact that he was a stowaway, and missed this extraordinarily fortunate chance of reaching Mexico.

Signals were shouted outside a minute later, followed by shrill whistling.

The wheels began to grind along the lines, then they began to clatter, and the train was fairly started on its southern journey.

Burgoyne had never dreamed that the window at the end of the van would be closed. He had counted on passing through it numberless times at night during the trip, to secure water, when the train stopped. As he grasped the strong iron bars now, as he tried the double-locked doors, he uttered an exclamation of dismayed alarm. It would be difficult to force his way to liberty, unless he chose to call out to the men during a stop. He must remain a prisoner until the train reached its destination.

"I'll try and stand the hunger and thirst until the very last moment," he decided heroically. "It will be just so many miles covered on the route to Mexico. There I must get, and this was the quickest, the only way for me."

He made a pillow of a bale containing carpets or rugs; and, thinking of Patrice, sunk into a profound slumber.

Only the realisation that every hour of progress meant twenty miles accomplished of his journey, sustained the prisoner and enabled him to uncomplainingly endure the monotony, the hunger and the thirst that assailed him all through the next day. He lay down at dark again, with his throat so parched, and the cravings of hunger so intense, that he could not sleep, and at early dawn, the third day of his journey, decided that he had better seek an escape ere he became too weak and overcome to help himself or make himself heard.

He approached the little window and, seizing the bars, set himself to the task of endeavouring to unloosen it. Vain hope, however, and when the train stopped at stations the particular truck he was in halted so far from the station that twice, when he shouted vigorously for deliverance, no one appeared to hear him.

"I *must* get out of this! My throat seems on fire. Water! water! I cannot live without it!" he gasped, almost delirously.

He kicked at a heavy box on the floor of the van, intent on loosening one of its boards, so as to secure an implement to pry the iron bars of the window out of place. He got a long split piece loose finally, but, as he did so, the breakage released a whole row of parcels packed in the box.

With some curiosity, and not a little hope, as a slight savoury aroma pervaded the air, suggestive of food, he took up and inspected one of the packages, tearing off its coverings.

"Food!" he ejaculated, with brightening eyes, as he read on the outside of a light tin box the record of its contents.

The packet and its companion parcels represented a consignment of potted meats. His knife-blade soon had the cover loose. The juicy, palatable morsels glided down his parched throat like nectar.

Ah! that was refreshing, rejuvenating. What new strength the food infused into frame and mind. If he only had water now!

As if in direct and immediate answer to his present wish, a swift patter on the top of the van sounded even above the roaring, monotonous grind of the wheels. He ran to the window. The shower grew to a torrent, He emptied the meat out of the can, and extended this latter as far out of the window as he could reach. It caught as well the drippings of the roof. He caught a pint of the precious fluid; he assuaged his burning thirst feverishly, ravenously. Then filling the can to the brim, emptying a second one of its contents, and filling that as well, he placed both in a safe corner of the truck, and sat down, content, hopeful, certain of food and water in abundance for the residue of his journey.

Five days later the agent at the terminus of the line unlocked the door of the van, drew it open, and passed on to the next one.

When he came back to inspect the contents of the trucks in turn, he found the blue van interior a scene of some disorder, with one broken package, and two cases of meat missing.

"A tramp, a stowaway," he soliloquised. "He must have had a dull ride of it, clear from Chicago. More decent than the average run, too. He's only used what he needed to sustain life, and didn't rip open and steal the balance."

The tramp, the stowaway, Adrian Burgoyne, had slipped from the van unperceived. A decent passenger was he, indeed, for, if any one mental resolve in his mind was powerful and earnest, it was a determination, at the very first opportunity, to remit to the shippers of the case of meat that had sustained his life during his rigorous journey, ten times the value of the rifled cans.

With a light heart and a hopeful eye, at eventide that same day, Adrian Burgoyne stood at the banks of a broad river, and scanned its opposite shores.

He had arrived at the Rio Grande. Beyond lay the promised land, the treasure, the White God—Mexico!

CHAPTER XXII.

In the Quicksands.

"Help!"

The cry rang out in accents of weakness and alarm, and echoed ominously through the rocky fastnesses of a deep gorge situated in the wildest portion of the Guayli district.

It was an involuntary, a hopeless appeal it seemed, and the person who uttered it realised the fact fully.

Through serpent-hunted brake, past forests of bewildering extent and luxuriance adown mighty cañons and across sun-baked plateaus, the daring, intrepid Adrian Burgoyne had forced his way for over three weeks.

Perils by land, perils by water, perils aerial, even, had menaced every foot of his path. The deep streams he was compelled to swim abounded in treacherous quicksands; every thicket seemed to hold a beast of prey; snakes menaced, bearing death inevitable in the blighting tips of their forked tongues; an oppressive air, dense with miasma, or breeding cyclonic disturbances that, later, nearly swept him to destruction, seemed ever present. The last few days of his arduous journey towards Guayli had been rife with terrors that turn the hair grey, and prepare men to face the ordinary dangers of existence with reckless indifference.

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Twice had he fallen into an ambush of the rival armies. Once, captured, he was condemned to be shot as a spy, escaping by a daring dash for liberty, that was accompanied by the sharp tattoo of half a hundred rifle balls, as they ricocheted among the rocks in a grim dance for his life, and now, fairly in sight of Guayli, with less than thirty miles between himself and the cave of Bureldo, the intrepid Englishman had stumbled into a trap in which it seemed the leagued forces of Nature were bent on dragging him down to destruction, with no trace left to tell how he had died.

It was nearly evening, and, coming to the banks of a bright, sparkling stream, he decided to cross it, and investigate the source of a thin, curling pillar of smoke among the timber, which apparently marked a camp or a habitation, on the opposite shore. He forded and swam the stream in safety, and with little difficulty. He started across a sandy waste to gain the thicket lining the river. Then, of a sudden, he paused, glanced down at his feet, and as suddenly sprang forward, as if a thousand serpents were grouped about the spot.

In vain! More deadly, menacing and certain than the swiftest "rattler," snakes of sand, ominous, grasping, deluding, had began to encircle his feet. He sank a foot, dragged himself free, stumbled, fell, sank deeper, and then, with a cry of horror, wavered ankle-deep in the meshes of a monster that shifted, rolled, enveloped him, with the sickening, deadly motion of a devil-fish.

"The quicksands!"

He gasped the words, a cold void of horror chilling heart and brain. He essayed to drag one foot free. An inch of upward progress attained, the disturbed particles only formed a new and stronger suction. He was knee-deep now.

Sinking—sinking—sinking! His breathing grew husky, his eyes terrified.

Waist-deep! He had ceased to struggle. Effort was in vain. In frenzied appeal, one shrill shriek rang from his bloodless lips.

"Help!"

The echoes of his voice rang adown the cañon, clear and resonant, and then came back to him mocking, tantalising, unanswered.

Adrian Burgoyne gave himself up for lost. He cast one last, lingering look at the fair sunlit scene, his soul reached out in memory for one final thought of the woman he so devotedly loved.

Then he closed his eyes. The deadly quicksands were heart-high now. In fancy, the tickling particles answered the wild throbbings of the excited life-pulse.

"Caramba—the sands!" Burgoyne opened his eyes with a shock; a faint soul of hope illumined his stricken face.

Peering from a rock was a man, Mexican in garb, harsh, repellant of feature, cunning, cruel of eye.

In Spanish he had jerked forth the startled hail; in Spanish, tumultuous, incoherent, Adrian Burgoyne replied:

"Help! It is the quicksands! A rope—a chain!"

"No, this!"

The Mexican disappeared behind the rock, but only for a moment. When he reappeared in view he was staggering under the weight of a great log, part of the dead trunk of a tree.

He poised it across the rock. Then, apparently, regardless of the consequences, so long as the end desired was gained, he gave it a violent push.

It shot forward, barely missing the head of the uncomprehending Burgoyne. It fell directly in front of him.

"Catch to it—hold firm!" shouted the Mexican.

"Ah!" panted Burgoyne hopefully, "I understand now."

He threw both arms about the log. There he clung tenaciously.

He could feel the shifting sands about his form, but they dragged him down no longer. The resistance offered by the log, with either end lying outside the unstable circle of quicksand, was an anchor of security.

The Mexican again disappeared. This time he was absent for fully an hour.

"He surely cannot mean to desert me!" soliloquised Burgoyne anxiously.

No, he reappeared at last. A man as villainous looking as himself was with him. They bore a stout rope, and within ten minutes, with the strong cable tied under his arms, Burgoyne was dragged to terra firma in safety.

Inert, exhausted, he lay on the greensward for some time unable to move, bestowing grateful glances upon his rescuers. They were men, judging from their looks, whom he would not have cared to meet in a lonely mountain path, but they had saved his life, and his heart went out to them thankfully.

As soon as he was able to walk, the Mexican assisted him through the timber, arriving finally at the source of the smoke that had attracted Burgoyne's attention—a rude hut. Near by, half-a-dozen dispirited looking half-breeds were digging and sluicing near a mine opening, a great hulking ruffian of a fellow directing their labour with the aid of a cowhide whip.

The Mexican treated Burgoyne as if he was some regal guest, providing him with an ample supper, a comfortable bed, and an appetising breakfast in the morning.

From subtle, guarded inquiries, Burgoyne ascertained the exact position of the monastery and the cave.

The Mexican and the companion who had helped to rescue Burgoyne listened politely to all the latter had to say, and as politely replied to all his questions, but there was a latent secretiveness, a sinister, watchful token in their manner, as Burgoyne started to leave them with renewed expressions of his gratitude and full appreciation of their kindly offices.

"I will say adieu," he remarked, taking each warmly by the hand; "but some day I shall return, to thank you more substantially for your great goodness to me. Adieu, señores."

"One moment!" spoke the owner of the hut, stepping forward and blocking Burgoyne's exit.

"Ay, you go not this way, surely," interpolated his companion, lounging against the open doorway, so as to completely block the exit.

"Eh? why! what is the matter?" queried the bewildered Burgoyne.

"The señor is a just man, I hope?" insinuated the Mexican gravely.

"I hope so, too."

"And yet he leaves us with only hollow thanks!"

"They are sincere, believe me!"

"They count for little, where bread is scarce and money precious."

"Oh!" exclaimed Burgoyne, with an ingenuous smile—"the señor wishes pay for his services?"

"Was it not earned?"

"Truly, doubly."

"Then?——"

"I am sorry to say I am penniless. I have not a single coin."

The Mexican scrowled darkly.

"And yet the stranger partook of our scanty stock freely?" he said.

"In our country—" began Burgoyne.

"I care not for your country!" interrupted the Mexican hotly. "I must have my pay!"

"At some future time."

"No! Now!"

Burgoyne was amazed at the sudden change in his host. From the smiling, open-faced friend he had become transformed abruptly into the sordid, scheming tyrant.

"It is useless to speak of recompense to a pauper!"

"I must be paid!" affirmed the Mexican decidedly.

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"Then allow me to return in a week—in a month. I shall have ample means."

"No! Now!"

"Yes, now, by all and every means!" piped in the Mexican's companion.

"Impossible!"

"Not at all."

"But, if I have no money——"

"There is still a way!"

The Mexican had taken out his knife, and, a sinister expression on his swarthy face, he toyed with it menacingly.

"What is the way, may I ask?" queried Burgoyne.

"The señor must remain!"

"What good will my detention do you?"

"The señor must work."

Burgoyne gave a vivid start.

"In other words," proceeded the Mexican craftily, "according to the law of Mexico, a debtor must pay his obligations in labour when he has no money with which he may liquidate the indebtedness. The peon law holds good in this case. The señor must remain. He shall work in the mine under the overseer. He becomes my property—my slave!"

(*To be continued.*)

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WHICH SHOULD YOU CHOOSE?

Now let me see how plain I can make what I have to say, for it's no use writing things unless they are understood.

Here is a house five storeys high—of course, not counting the cellar. Suppose the owner offered you the privilege of living, rent free, either in the cellar or on the topmost floor, and nowhere else, which of the two places would you choose? Is your answer ready? "Yes, all right," you say. Well, keep it between your teeth a minute while we run over this short letter from Mr. Simpson.

"In the spring of 1891," he says, "I began to feel weak and out of sorts, and could not imagine what had overtaken me. I was tired, weary, and heavy. All the snap, life, and energy seemed to be gone out of me. My head felt dull and thick, and ached a good deal; there was a foul, bitter taste in my mouth, and I was constantly spitting up a tough, slimy phlegm that gathered in my throat.

"My appetite fell off, and the little food I took punished me terribly, and I was never easy until I had vomited it up, and after doing so I felt weak from the want of nourishment and the strain of vomiting. As the malady obtained a firmer hold upon me I began to be troubled with palpitation of the heart. It throbbed and thumped until I could scarcely get my breath.

"Then a short, dry cough fixed upon me, which shook me greatly, and made me sweat until beads of perspiration stood upon my face. At night my sleep was broken by frightful dreams, and I arose in the morning unrefreshed, and even more exhausted than after a day's hard work.

"After two or three months of this kind of suffering I became dreadfully nervous and excitable. Noises and sounds which in a state of health I should not have noticed were now unbearable. I was strangely apprehensive of evil without any cause that could be reasoned out or defined. I had no desire for company, I wanted to remain in silence by myself. I was now so weak I could barely crawl about, and if I walked out a little way I was obliged to stop and rest here and there.

"My eyes were sunken, and I was so worn down and emaciated that I lost all hope of ever getting back my flesh and strength. *In very truth I grew so low-spirited that I often wished myself dead.*

"In this low and wretched condition I continued for nine months, *during the whole of which time I was away from my work.* I had a doctor attending me, but his medicine had no effect.

"In December (1891) I determined to use a remedy which had cured my wife of indigestion and weakness five years before—namely, Mother Seigel's Syrup. I got a supply from the Co-operative Stores, Crosby, and began taking it. In a week's time I found great relief. My appetite revived, and what I ate agreed with me and gave me strength. Continuing to take the Syrup I grew better and better. Gradually, but certainly, all the pain and nervousness wore away, and I got back to my work as strong as ever. And the fact that I have not lost a day's work through sickness since that time shows how radical the cure was. (Signed) William Simpson, Crosby, near Maryport, Cumberland, October 10th, 1894."

Now we are ready for your answer. As between the cellar and the topmost floor you choose the latter, of course. Well, the human body is a house of many storeys, and the topmost is the best. When we are in good health we live up there. When indigestion and dyspepsia (as in Mr. Simpson's case) seize us, we move down into the cellar. We are *low* in spirits when we are ill in body. Then, when Mother Seigel's Syrup has cured the disease, we move up again. You appreciate the illustration. All right. The moral? Very plain. *Prevent* the disease by a timely use of the remedy, and you will always live where there is daylight and fresh air.

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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 371. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 8TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

100 YEARS' WORLD-WIDE RECORD OF SUCCESS.

NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS

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STOMACH & LIVER COMPLAINTS DEBILITY

THE BEST OF ALL TONICS and a GENTLE APERIENT. Mild in Operation, Perfectly Safe, and Free from Injurious Drugs. Sold Everywhere in Bottles at 1/1½, 2/9, and 11/- each.

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Trade Mark—One Little Bottle.

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By Messrs. F. HODGSON & SON, The Well-known Carpet Manufacturers of the City of Leeds, will take effect on sight of this advertisement.

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9ft. by 9ft.	" " "	7/6	12ft. by 13½ft.,	" " "	14/6
9ft. by 10½ft.,	" " "	8/6	12ft. by 15ft.,	" " "	15/9
9ft. by 12ft.,	" " "	9/6	12ft. by 18ft.,	" " "	19 6
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F. HODGSON AND SON,

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Bilious & Nervous Disorders,

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£100
COUPON.
No. 6
Feb. 8, 1896.
S.S. S.S.

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Dr. Grey's **FAT REDUCING** Pills.

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Prevents Decay. Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented. Neuralgic Headache and all Nerve Pains Removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.

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Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

ONE PENNY

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EDITED BY

C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 371.] [ONE PENNY

For the Week ending February 8th, 1896

A FAIRY TALE OF MODERN DAYS.

SAT looking at Ruth, more and more puzzled each moment.

At school she had been noted for her hair, which was a mass of bronze-brown that caught the light like burnished copper; but, although her eyes were dark and her features were good, yet we were often led to exclaim: "Why is it that Ruth is not a beauty?" We finally agreed that it must be her lack of manner, for she was diffident to an extreme, and even dull at times. But for some strange reason she always held a strong attraction for me, I could never tell why, and I felt sorry a few years later when I heard she had married a young mechanic, and begun life in a very small way.

Seven years had elapsed before we were thrown together again, and I was utterly unprepared for the superbly beautiful woman who met me so charmingly, and renewed our acquaintance with such native grace. Her features were clear cut and refined, her complexion divinely fair, her hair more bronze and coppery than ever, her carriage erect and queenly, but her eyes—there was something there which fascinated me. I can call it nothing but the gleam of conscious power.

She seemed utterly out of place in her little cottage home, dressed in a simple cashmere, guiltless of ornament, with only a linen collar about her neck. To me she seemed many degrees above the husband, who but lately had become a master mechanic, and was now in possession of a fairly good salary. He was a determined sort of a man, and owned the little home in which they lived—one of the kind of men who are more regardful of the future than the present, all of which was very prudent and proper, of course, but I looked at Ruth and wondered and wondered. It seemed so strange, so remarkable that she should have developed in such a marvellous fashion in such a narrow place in life. I am possessed of an intense penetration, and divined that it was some

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unseen, unknown influence that had changed her from the diffident girl to the beautiful woman.

Perhaps it was a little wicked of me, but I could not resist saying: "Ruth, how can you possibly be content with what fate has brought you? Don't you ever long for riches, and power, and station, for gems and jewels, for silks and velvets, wealthy neighbours who live so near you? Why, Ruth, you are fitted to shine in society; it is a crime that you are not in your rightful place."

A strange expression sprang into her eyes. She smiled with a meaning I could not fathom. I resolved to strike fire if there was any in her. "Your husband is a good man, of course, but he is not your mate. A woman as beautiful and accomplished as you should have married a prince and have lived in a palace."

"Perhaps I have," she said curiously.

It was my turn to be taken by surprise.

"No; you need not think to fill me with discontent, my friend. I have no regret at what fate has brought me. I am happier by far in this little cottage than most women in their palaces of splendour. Shall I tell you why? Because I have had a terrible experience. I once allowed myself to be covetous and discontented, and—I wonder if you could understand if I told you the story?" A bright rose colour spread over her cheek, a little flame burnt in her eyes. "Go on, go on!" I cried. "I *knew* you had a secret."

"I shall never forget the day that came near wrecking my life. It was two years ago, and grand receptions were given by two of the wealthy neighbours who live so near me. Awnings were stretched down to the street, and beautifully-dressed women slipped from their carriage doors and floated in like fairies rather than mortals. The strains of dance-music came tantalisingly to my ears and stirred all the evil there was in me, latent and unknown before.

"The next day, I remember, I was so discontented with my lot that I fairly despised the clothes I wore and the walls that encompassed me. Philip was trying hard to make the first payment on our home, but I remember that on that particular day I even regretted having married him and wished I were free to choose again, and I would wed riches and live in splendour, like my wealthy neighbours. I was so tired of being poor and working hard without any little pleasures to lighten my burdens. I knew it was wicked, but I was so tired mentally and physically that I didn't even care. I put the baby to sleep that night completely out of humour, wondering why I never had any of the delights of life, but only the shadows and clouds. A woman cannot indulge in such emotions without punishment, and you shall see what I had to suffer in consequence.

"Now I cannot explain; you will have to let me tell it all just as it happened, without any explanation, for there is none. I had hardly closed my eyes in sleep when I felt a strange lightness of spirit take possession of me, and a peculiar attraction drawing me fairly out of my body—if you can conceive of it—and taking me on and on through space, till I came to a brilliantly-lighted palace. In a moment I was led to an apartment by a number of richly-dressed women, who seemed waiting for me, saying: 'Here is your wardrobe; chose what you will wear.'

"Dazzled by the brilliancy of everything about me, such as I had never dreamed of in my life, I could scarcely tell what I wanted; but they said: 'Hurry off that common brown dress; the prince will be scandalised.' And they loosed my poor gown, and it dropped on the floor, while they arrayed me in something shiny and silvery, and all floating around me in silken billows, and they put a filmy silvery veil upon my head, and wound diamonds about my throat and waist as carelessly as if they had been garlands. In a moment I was in the midst of music, and arm-in-arm with a magnificent-looking man with a royal pride upon his face. Before I knew what I was doing, we were standing before a patriarchal priest, and married by a kind of ceremony, I know not what. Delicious music filled the air, a banquet was waiting, and then feats of magic and marvellous dancing passed before us, as we sat on our chairs of state, like king and queen.

"I was in a joyous exultation. I felt as if at last I had reached the place intended for me—such is the extent of human pride—and when at last the vision faded, and I sought for my cotton dress to go home in, and woke to find myself in the humble place I had left a few hours before, I exclaimed: 'Oh, what a beautiful dream!'

"Just wait a moment. Don't laugh and say 'It was a dream,' for you will discover differently. All day I was in an excited state, and when at night I closed my eyes I hoped I would dream the same dream over again. In a moment I felt the same lightness of spirit and the same attraction, and soon found my way back into the realm of the night before, but with the difference that 'the prince'—as they called him—himself escorted me to the dressing-room, and waited for me to put off my common dress, and array myself in some of the splendid garments at my command. I chose a royal robe of something deliciously like an Arabian Nights' story—a blending of all colours woven with gold—and advanced to meet him. He led me into a great reception-hall, and there were renewed the delights of the night before, which finished in much the same manner.

"Now, the next day I was in a feverish state of excitement, and entirely forgot the humble walls about me, or the tired husband working for our daily bread. I went through my various duties in a mechanical way, thinking of the delights of the night before, and wondering whether I should ever see my prince again. No thought of wrong or culpability had entered my head. I was like a child playing a game.

"I may as well say that this was but the beginning of my peculiar existence, for each night I sought the wonderful realm, and spent the night in the midst of luxury and splendour, getting through the day like one in a daze, believing the real to be the dream, and the dream to be the real life. I came to know the people in this new world much better than my neighbours around me. The patriarchal priest proved to be the tutor of the prince, and as time went by I woke up from my mistaken idea that this was merely dreaming, as I had so innocently supposed.

"One night, as the prince kissed me good-night, I said, suddenly remembering my other life: 'But it seems to me that my husband has blue eyes, while yours are as black as night. How strange it would be if this were all a mistake.' And I woke up instantly.

"Sitting up and looking around me, I realised that I was under a spell of some kind, and all day felt a sense of responsibility stealing over me. I knew it was my duty to resist this glamour, but was so under its mastery that I could not. I tried to tell Philip, but he only laughed at me, and I found I was doomed to a dual existence.

"I can only remember it now in snatches—little bits here and there. I remember the tutor had a wicked, keen

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eye, and that he and the prince always seemed acting in unison. Up to a certain time I had been very much as I was in my little home—rather dull (that is outside of my sense of luxurious enjoyment)—and drinking in rather than expressing any thought upon the strange things around me. But all at once this changed, as I became possessed of a desire to comprehend the spell under which I found myself. I remember the tutor—his name was Michael Velitski—glancing at me curiously when I asked:

"'What do you do when you leave here?'

"'We are travelling—the prince and I.'

"'How delightful! Tell me what you have seen. How I would love to travel.'

"And then he would tell me the most wonderful tales of Eastern lands, and I would drink them in, and ask for more.

"'You will make a good pupil,' he said. Then turning to the prince: 'We have not made a mistake this time.'

"Now this puzzled me very much, and I resolved not to rest until I had found out what it meant. My every faculty became on the alert, every thought day and night bent upon comprehending the strange world in which I found myself. Nothing escaped my notice, and I devoted myself to books and studies, and the many occult mysteries around us, filling the very atmosphere we breathed.

"All at once, suddenly, a revulsion of feeling took possession of me. I grew weary of the high pressure state of living, the intense excitement, even the splendour and magnificence palled upon me, and I grew to hate the prince and his tutor, and the people they had around them. I began to think my humble little home the most beautiful spot in the world, and my chubby little boy, and my noble, hard-working husband, as the chief joys of my life. I loved them as never before, but this horrid spell was upon me—one that could not be broken by ordinary methods. I became as one possessed, resolved to escape if possible, as the horrors of my situation dawned upon me. So lightly and so gradually had the chain been forged upon me that I had not realised it until I was bound fast.

"Wrath and resentment began to burn in my breast, and at last one night I said: 'Why do you call me here night after night? I am tired of it all, and wish to be released.' But they laughed at me, and the tutor looked positively satanic. 'I tell you I am tired of this unreal world, and I demand that you release me.'

"'We are married,' said the prince, with an evil smile; 'there is no escape till death.'

"'Then let death free us now!' I cried. And, seizing a jewelled dagger lying near, I plunged it into his heart. They both laughed at me as the prince took it out and handed it to me with a mocking smile.

"I was astonished. Here was a law different from the other life.

"'Can there be no death here?' I cried.

"'Calm yourself,' said the tutor, 'and begin your studies afresh. For fifty years have I studied the laws of the occult world, and never yet have I seen a death in the occult state. If we could be easily killed while in this condition we should scarcely dare to meet so freely, or we should be at each other's mercy, indeed. No, begin your studies afresh and you will find that death can result only from injury inflicted by mortal hand upon the mortal body.'

"Finding that it was only by understanding the laws of the world that I was in that I could hope to escape, I devoted myself to the most diligent study, and soon persuaded the tutor that I was in perfect harmony with the plans of himself and the prince. Ah, I needed all the cunning of the fox and all the wisdom of the serpent to carry me through the trial, for each day I was becoming more frantic.

"'How you have changed, Ruth?' said my husband to me; 'your eyes have a gleam in them which is positively murderous at times. What does it mean?' But what was the use of telling him? He could not help me. He would not believe.

"'So neither dagger, poison, or bullet can kill an astral body?' I asked the tutor one night, trying to find out all I could.

"'No; only the mortal body can be injured. Each astral body is connected with its mortal envelope by a luminous thread, ten million times finer than that of a spider, and death can ensue only by severing this thread, which may be done only by a shock to the earthly or mortal body. So you may amuse yourself by every kind of injury to the prince's astral body that you choose. He is perfectly safe.'

"All this time it was kept concealed from me where or in what land the prince and his tutor really were: and I discovered that even astral bodies had their limitations, and could not go in quest of each other against his or her will. We were held in a kind of thrall at the prince's bidding; and yet, in spite of his power, he had his limitations as well as we. Much as he desired to follow me to my home, I found that by a tremendous opposition I could prevent his doing so. Another thing I discovered was that even *he* could not remain in the occult state, and out of his mortal body, beyond a limited time, and many more things which I will not stop to tell. Enough to say that, bit by bit, I unravelled the mystery of the spell placed upon me.

"The tutor was an old man of seventy, who had devoted his entire life to the study of what is now termed occultism; the prince, who was of Russian birth, had been placed under his tuition in extreme youth, and was drawn into its meshes successfully. At last they discovered the power of freeing the astral body from the earthly body, and, by united effort, drew to themselves others of a similar nature as companions. They had built this realm of pleasure by pure will-power, and by the same means drew to themselves from all over the world new elements to sustain it.

"Their theory was that every object in Nature or art had an astral form as well as a real one, and these they drew together and combined to make up the magnificence around us. In their travels they ceaselessly gathered astral shapes of every treasure, every splendour for their occult palace and wonderful realm. They had discovered, however, the need of a woman's nature to unravel some of the intricacies for them—a woman who would be pliable, and yet possess sufficient will to add to their power.

"The day that I had allowed myself to become so discontented they had exercised a tremendous spell of attraction for just such a woman as I, and so I fell into the snare. They now had new and wonderful experiments they wished to make, and it was expected that I would lend them my powers of will, and strength, and acumen, to accomplish the grand purpose, now that I had discovered that resistance was useless. But my every sense was on the alert, and I was most keen in trying to find a loophole of escape, for daily I hated them more and more.

"I often noticed a strange look of pity on the women's

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faces around me, but could get no answer from them. They were silent on the only theme on which I cared to talk.

"'Why will you not tell me what this dreadful spell means?' I would say to them; 'can you not help me to escape?'

"'We dare not,' said one, who was called Nerissa; 'the prince's will is absolute.'

"'But tell me.' I intreated, 'how did you all happen to come here first?'

"'The same way that you did,' said Nerissa sadly.

"'Were you married to the prince?' I asked quickly

"Every eye was averted, every head hung in tacit admission. In an instant I understood that this was the meaning of Michael Velitski when he said: 'We have not made a mistake this time.' But why had each been dethroned in turn, and reduced to this subjection. A new horror began to steal over me.

"By this time I had learned many things of occult influence, and, by a certain extent of absolute opposition to the prince, I bent Nerissa to my will. Through her I should learn the extent of my bondage. I had only a moment at a time, but by constant effort I finally gained the truth.

"Each of these women in her earthly form had been discontented with her lot, and in this state of mind had been subject to the mighty influence exerted by the prince and Velitski coming at their bidding. Each in turn had been wedded to the prince, and each in turn had fallen in love with him so deeply, and so absolutely, that she had lost all power of will, and thus was no further use to him. Each in turn had been reduced to the position of a dependent, and held there absolutely. They displayed no jealousy of me as a rival—they were scarcely more than automatons. I felt sure that there was no danger of my being reduced to their sad plight. I was too self-willed and positive, and, moreover, I hated the prince. But, instead of this comforting me, it made me only the more frantic in my desire to escape.

"At last—one night—they were more than usually confident, and I heard them speak inadvertently of 'the ship.' 'That means that they are on the ocean somewhere,' I said to myself.

"'What part of the world are you in now?' I asked boldly.

"The prince laughed. 'You wouldn't believe me, would you, if I should tell you that at this moment we are living on the morning star?'

"It was useless, I thought, to hope to catch him off his guard, yet I feigned to laugh, as if I enjoyed his reply as being very witty indeed.

"The next morning, with aching head and throbbing brow, I bemoaned my fate, feeling that I was perhaps doomed to this awful existence for the remainder of my life. I picked up the morning paper absently, and the first thing my eye fell upon was an item regarding the ship *Morning Star*, which was due on a certain date in the Thames.

"In a moment I was roused, every pulse in my body on fire. This ship was on its way to the Thames, bringing the hated prince and his tutor directly across my path. They were dangerous enough in the occult world, what would they be in the real? Should I become mesmerised and controlled by them body as well as soul? I knew not what powers they might possess over me—I might be induced to commit crimes. Surely I had reason to despair.

"Then all at once a revelation came to me—all at once I saw a gleam of hope, a method of escape. I had not studied the occult sciences in vain. All at once I saw a flaw, a weak spot, in the vital part of the whole structure.

"A tremendous resolve took possession of me; I prepared myself for the fantastic revel of the night as never before. I would lend myself to every device that should deceive them, and when the summons came I went eagerly—I had a purpose. So well did I simulate harmony with their plans, and so great was my strength of will in aiding them, that they fell into a rapture of delight.

"'My sweet Ruth, what should we do without you?' said the prince. 'I wonder if you are half as bright and clever in your earthly form as you are in your astral body?' and he gave me a strange glance.

"'Why don't you come and see?' I asked carelessly.

"'Perhaps I shall,' he replied.

"'Are you not afraid I shall plunge a real knife into your real heart?'

"'Not at all. I shall hold you there by a stronger power than I do here.' It seemed as if two fires burnt in his eyes.

"'Do you have this power over Nerissa in her earthly form, that she is so weak and subjective?' I asked carelessly, trying to conceal my intentness, 'because I should not like that.'

"He gave an impatient, scornful exclamation. 'Nerissa? Bah! *Her* mortal body is in a madhouse.'

"Something in my brain gave way in spite of my tremendous effort at self-control. But resolutely I steadied myself. The moment had come. This occult palace, with all its people, was but the construction of man. Even here there were limitations. This world of splendour and mysteries was built upon a foundation as light and insecure as the clouds themselves. It had no God. This, my woman's nature, had felt from the first. This was the grand plan, and by means of it I would topple this occult kingdom from its place and cast it to the winds of heaven. I had resolved to use my counter-force of will to keep them in the occult state far beyond the limited time until they were weakened, and thus my power should be greater for the purpose I had planned.

"I steadied myself. I felt a mighty power growing within me, but born of desperation and desire.

"They were ready to go. The prince kissed me good-night, as usual, and said: 'I have a surprise in store for you——'

"'And I for you,' I said intently. 'To-night is the last time that we shall meet.'

"The prince laughed mockingly, but the keen eyes of Velitski showed a new expression—a vague sense of distrust. Too late he realised that I could be dangerous without any weapons but my wits and the intuitions of a woman's nature. Each moment I detained them placed them more at my mercy, for they had overstayed their time, and I, coming so much later at their summons, was still strong and vigorous.

"'Please God, this is the last time you shall ever bring me here,' I said solemnly. 'You have wonderful powers, but you are only men after all. In your might and pride you have built this world, and brought us here against our wills, but you have forgotten there is a God,' and I fell upon my knees and clasped my hands in prayer. I felt that my powers of importuning that moment would carry my prayer straight to Deity, and regardless of the mocking laughter of the prince, I implored that supernatural agency of some kind might be sent to destroy the power of these fiendish men who held our souls in thrall.

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"'We must go!' cried the tutor. 'She will kill us if she keeps us here. It is already beyond our time.' But I had them bound by the very power they held over me; at last my will was the stronger, and they could not go.

"Meanwhile I still prayed unceasingly, feeling intuitively that I was heard. I made my vow then and there, that if I could but once be released I would never again cherish a discontented thought in my breast as long as I should live. The prince still mocked, but the uncanny old man stood trembling, while Nerissa and the others gathered round in wonder.

"All at once Velitski cried out in agony: 'Something has happened!' and he fell prone upon the floor. 'My God! death is coming! The ship is on fire!'

"And the prince gave a scream—such a scream as the tiger gives when he is shot to the heart. And then I saw a gleam of faintly luminous thread, and it was broken. The struggle of death was not long, and, like vapour, the astral bodies of the prince and Velitski floated upon the air, and, amid wondering exclamations, the palace of wonder faded into nothingness.

"By my side was Nerissa, trembling with a new-found clearness of mind, yet scarcely knowing herself. 'You are free, Nerissa!' I cried; 'you are free! We have escaped this thraldom worse than death. Thank Him who is above all!' And then I knew no more.

"When I awoke I was surprised to find Philip leaning over me with tears in his eyes, and to this day I have not recovered from the shock of learning that three weeks had elapsed between that awful night and the morning I awoke—three weeks utterly lost from my reckoning. I made a complete confession to my husband, but he treated the whole thing as a chimera of my brain, and thought I was lightheaded whenever I spoke of it, so that I have ceased to mention the matter. But from that day I have been only too glad to lead my simple life with what fate has brought me. I think my little home the loveliest in the world, and I actually glory in my plain woollen gown."

"But, Ruth, dear," I said, "it is very evident that the whole thing *was* a chimera of your brain, and a fantastic one, too."

"How about the education I received, and the ideas on occultism which I never heard of, even, until then; and the powers which I developed, and have since been trying to lose in order to become an ordinary human being?" said she, calmly looking me straight in the eye.

"Well, that is very wonderful, of course."

"How about the ship, *Morning Star*, which was burned at sea on its way to this port that very night, and whose crew and passengers all escaped, save two—an old man and a young man—both Russians, who could not be wakened in spite of all efforts to arouse them?"

"Ruth, you don't mean to say that such is the fact?"

She gave me a triumphant smile. "If the captain of the *Morning Star* told the truth, it is; and this was the story he told on his arrival in London."

"Almost thou persuadest me to believe," said I musingly, looking into the wondrous depths of her eyes, fascinated by that singular gleam of conscious power.

And then Philip came in, and I saw that she greeted him with a most radiant smile and brightening eyes. Still, as I glanced from the simple surroundings to Philip's mean attire and horny hands to the beautiful woman, with her bronze-tinted hair and queenly carriage, I thought to myself:

"I wonder if she never really regrets her lost palace and her wonderful prince?"

Ella Sterling Cummins.

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BY WINIFRED GRAHAM. *Author of "Through the Valley," "Six First-Class Passengers," etc.*

SUMMARY.

Philip Roche marries Eleanor Grebby, daughter of a farmer, and they spend their honeymoon on the Continent.

CHAPTER III.

God made the woman for the man.—*Tennyson.*

"OH, do stop and take me to tea in that lovely confectioner's shop!" cries a pleading voice, while an eager hand flourishes a parasol which pokes the driver in the back. "Oh, I wish I could speak the horrid language."

"But, my dear," replies the man at her side, "you have only just had your coffee and unlimited bon-bons. I want to show you Brussels thoroughly. It is a most interesting town."

Eleanor Roche sighs. To her uncultivated mind the magnificent Hotel de Ville, the Roman Catholic Churches, galleries, picturesque towers, gables, and doorways of ancient buildings, hold but little charm.

She is madly excited about the bonnet and boot shops, the lace fans and collars, chocolates, and ice creams.

Philip is bent on enlarging his wife's mind, and hopes to awake in her his fervent love for art. Surely in time she will learn to appreciate it. At present she is decidedly slow of comprehension. Though looking lovelier than ever in her new Parisian toilettes, Eleanor disappoints him. She talks perpetually of her appearance, dresses three or four times a day, revels in admiring glances from male tourists, and displays strange apathy when sight-seeing.

"How ugly the foreign women are!" exclaims Eleanor, "so short, plump, and round. Why, even our miller's daughters could lick them into fits."

Her slang jars on him, but Eleanor is so sublimely unconscious of offence and childishly contented with herself that he has not the heart to murmur.

Besides, even the touch of her small hand thrills him with the old pleasure.

She surveys her feet admiringly.

"Did you ever see such lovely shoes? The points are like needles. It would be wicked to walk in them. Oh, dear, where are we stopping now?"

"At the Church of St. Gudule. You must see it before we go. The pulpit is wonderful."

Eleanor gathers up her silken skirts and steps lightly to the pavement.

She thinks this part of the honeymoon very dry, when there are cafés, music, and shops at hand.

"Isn't the carving beautiful?" murmurs her husband, examining the pulpit with fresh interest, from the fact that Eleanor is visiting his favourite places.

"You see, dear," taking her arm, "it is supported on the Tree of Knowledge, and of Life. Adam and Eve are being driven out of Paradise on one side by the Angel, while Death is gliding round with his dart."

"Ugh!" says Eleanor, shivering slightly, "what a nasty subject to choose. If you had been Adam at Copthorne, and thought you would gain anything by eating our apples, wouldn't you have devoured the lot?—that is to say, if I, as Eve, had been unselfish enough to leave any!"

She laughs at her own humour.

"It is scarcely a subject to jest upon," whispers Philip.

Eleanor's bright eyes sadden instinctively.

How has she displeased him?

"It is a marvellous piece of workmanship," he murmurs, as they move away.

He wonders if Eleanor, who has never even heard of "Rubens," feels her ignorance; but his thought is unconsciously answered by her careless, yet happy, air when he imparts his wisdom. Her great, expressive eyes seem to say: "I have no doubt it is very interesting to you, but I have so much else to think of."

Having escaped from the bewildering pulpit out into the fresh air, her spirits rise, while her fancy turns to the tempting pastry in the shop windows.

She catches sight of her face and form in a mirror as they pass to one of the small round tables, ordering coffee and cakes. Her heart kindles with love for her own beautiful being. It is not actual conceit, but genuine, unbiassed admiration for Mother Nature's handiwork.

A young Englishman of insipid appearance is seated opposite, enjoying the mild pleasure of an ice *à la panache*. He puts up his eyeglass and stares at Eleanor. She returns the look frankly, taking in his narrow forehead, ginger hair, and elongated neck.

"Newly married," thinks the man, noting the fresh lustre of her jewellery.

"English," mentally ejaculates Eleanor, eyeing his scrupulously clean linen.

"A woman to be loved and hated in the same breath," so runs his masculine meditation. "Tantalising open eyes, without a blush in them, and a face like the bust of Clytie."

"What is engrossing your attention, dearest?" whispers Philip, seeing her pre-occupied.

"I am wondering if that young man's mother ever thought him handsome. The nose might have been promising once, before the last half inch grew, and his hair was gold when she first cut his ringlets."

Philip looks at the stranger's dissipated eyes, and despite the apparent innocence which the hallowing presence of a guileless ice-cream will temporarily shed over Lothario himself, sees the general demoralisation that has set in.

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Kneels at her feet to repair the damage.

"He is young to be blunted and coarsened," thinks Philip. Annoyed by the the impudent stare which possibly amuses rather than displeases his wife, he tells Eleanor she has had enough, and rises to signify departure. Lothario is still covering Clytie with his gaze. She pauses to caress a lean black cat with hungry eyes, that has crept in unobserved from the street. Hurriedly emptying a jug of cream in her saucer, Eleanor is about to present it to the plaintive stranger. Tom, however, scents the cream, springs on his hind legs, and upsets the liquid over her Parisian skirt.

The insipid young man starts forward, for Philip is paying at the counter, and kneels at her feet to repair the damage with his handkerchief.

Mrs. Roche stands watching helplessly, her lips curving into smiles.

"You are very kind," she murmurs, as his eyeglass falls amongst her chiffons. "The cat was hungry, and now he won't get anything. Philip will not stay and ——"

She breaks off shortly, for her husband has turned and discovered the youth on his knees before Eleanor, who, as he rises, slips his card into her hand.

"I will see the cat's fed," he whispers.

She gives him a grateful glance, and explaining the incident to Philip, hurries away, with the stranger's card hidden in her pale kid glove.

When she is back in the hotel, Eleanor looks at the name.

Herbert Dallison,

Junior Conservative Club.

"I don't suppose we shall ever meet again," she says to herself reflectively. "But he must be kindhearted, or he wouldn't have troubled about my dress or the cat."

Though Eleanor Roche is so in love with her own lustrous eyes, she does not yet realise how much goodwill they can win her. She has yet to learn that the dangerous gift of a subtle charm may make or mar its owner's life.

"We have only one more day here," says Philip, who had mapped out their tour, "and I want you to see 'Waterloo,' dearest."

"Is it amusing?" asks Eleanor.

"Well, interesting is more the word."

"Then I probably shall not care for it. The places you call interesting are so dull!"

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However, Philip carries out his plan, and takes her to the little straggling village of Braue l'Alleud. The churchyard full of English graves and monuments quite distresses Eleanor.

"To think of all these brave men dying nobly for their country, and then being buried in this out-of-the-way place," she exclaims.

"I suppose it is all the same to them," replies Philip.

Herbert Dallison stands beside her.

"But I don't like the idea, nor am I fond of the sight of graves, and the thought of death. Oh, Philip! what is that fat old man saying to you?"

"He wants to show us a grave over the Marquis of Anglesea's leg, and is the proud possessor of the house where it was amputated. It was buried in a polished coffin, and has a monument erected to its memory. But who *are* you eyeing so intently, Eleanor?" turning as he speaks. "Why! If it isn't that impudent young puppy again, who mopped up the milk!"

"Cream, Philip, cream."

"Well! don't look at him, darling," putting his arm through hers to draw her gently away. "We will escape from the voluble Belgian with the leg story. He wants to show us the boot that once cased the foot. Such a fuss about nothing!"

Eleanor returns to the carriage, but as they drive to the huge mound with the Belgic Lion on the summit, she is conscious that Herbert Dallison is following.

For the rest of the day he always seems only a yard from her, as they examine the red walls pitted by bullets, and wander round the Museum. He has a party of friends with him—Eleanor can hear them chaffing the guide, and ridiculing everything. Their absurd remarks amuse her, from time to time she laughs for no apparent reason.

At last she owns to fatigue, and Philip leaves her, while he goes in search of their carriage.

"Would you like some relics?" says a voice at her elbow.

Eleanor knows who is speaking before she looks round. Herbert Dallison stands beside her, holding out a French forage cap, a bullet, and a rusty sword broken off in the middle.

She seizes them delightedly.

"Thank you, thank you; but please go away," as Philip's figure looms in sight.

She does not need to ask twice. Herbert Dallison seems to vanish into thin air.

"You silly child!" cries Philip laughingly, "to spend your money on those so-called 'relics' manufactured at Birmingham or Brussels to beguile innocent tourists. A fresh crop of bullets and swords, I'm told, is sown every year, that you may have the pleasure of seeing them turned up yourself."

Eleanor smiles a little nervously. She is beginning to wish she had not taken the presents. What would Philip say if he knew?

He helps her into the carriage with her spoil, the giver following with his party in the rear.

Eleanor becomes momentarily more conscience-stricken; the sight of the "relics" are hateful to her.

"I want to throw all this rubbish away," she cries at last. "It will only be a worry to me."

"Very true," replies her husband.

"I know," a mischievous twinkle in her eyes. "Let me shy them out on the road, and someone will think they have discovered real curiosities."

She stands up in childish glee, casting back a mocking smile at Herbert Dallison. One by one she flings his gifts from her, with an expressive look signifying second thoughts are best. He has taken his friends into his confidence, and is horrified at the hilarious laughter which breaks from them at Eleanor's act.

"Hang it all," he mutters, "it's beastly ungrateful; can't buy that sort of rot for nothing."

But he is too proud to stop and recover his property, so a bullet, a cap, and a sword are left by the wayside like the seed that was not good, to pass into strange hands.

"Moral," cries Bertie's pal, slapping him on the back, "don't interfere with honeymoon couples, they're abominably slow. Stick to widows, old man, for the future."

At the word "widow" Bertie actually blushes. There is more sting in this light chaff than his comrades suppose, for the vision of a villa at Richmond with its dark-haired divinity rises between the dust of the two carriages, soothing his ruffled feelings and drowning Eleanor's fair form in the seas of forgetfulness.

The honeymoon slips by pleasantly.

Mrs. Roche enjoys the long railway journeys above everything, which astonishes Philip, who thinks them the worst part of the trip.

"You see I so seldom go in trains," Eleanor says when he expresses surprise. "I love to listen to the whizz of the engine, and see the rushing, panting people on the stations worrying the grand officials in their smart uniforms. Then it is so nice to be first-class, and lean back on the cushions and cock up your feet if you wish. Besides, it is awfully jolly just to look out of the window and think."

"What do you think of?" asks her husband.

"All the beautiful presents you have given me, and the house on the lovely terrace at Richmond where I am to live."

The pleasure she takes in little things is a daily marvel to Philip. In the train, for instance, every moment she opens her dressing-bag, to shake scent from a silver bottle over her hands or peep in a dainty glass at her complexion. Each time they stop something fresh must be bought—a bunch of grapes, a bag of red plums, flowers, and unwholesome-looking tarts.

She actually purchases a tumbler of lager beer, drinking it with relish, declaring it is quite home-like and jolly.

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Eleanor never worries about anything. Should the train be missed or the luggage stray, it is all the same to her. An hour's wait on a dull little platform is never grumbled at. "We'll just have to sit and whistle," she declares, and amuses herself mimicking the porters, which she succeeds in doing wonderfully well, while Philip, in spite of numerous eccentricities, forgives her everything, and worships her devotedly.

"Alas! that we have to return," he sighs, as they glide in a small boat on the Lake of Geneva. "I must be back in the city this week."

"And you will make me *lots* of money?" expanding her eyes and showing her beautiful teeth.

"Won't you be contented with a little?"

"Oh, no. I want to entertain. You must bring your friends from London, and the house you have so long neglected shall be packed with guests."

"We'll see about that," says Philip, not liking to damp her ardour. "You must remember, though, that I am not a walking gold mine, little wife."

"Can the boatman understand what we say?"

"He only knows a smattering of English. What a strong, steady stroke he pulls!" Eleanor leans over the side, gazing down the clear depths.

"I never saw such wonderful water; you can see ever so far below. How amusing it would be to drop pebbles in and watch them sink."

"Here is a stray one on the seat," said Philip, throwing it overboard. Eleanor watches the descent with sparkling eyes.

"It is still in sight," she cries, "whirling through the water! My word! how clear the lake is. I must see it again."

She glances round, but there are no more stones.

Before Philip has time to stop her she opens her purse and drops a coin over the side of the boat.

"Look!' there it goes," laughing lightly. "Isn't it fascinating?"

The rower has stopped, and with eager, covetous eyes watches the wilful waste. Those coins would mean bread to him and his children, while she throws them to feed the

"Stop, Eleanor!" he says sternly.

deep! Another and yet another fall from her slim hands.

Philip has turned quite pale with anger.

"Stop! Eleanor," he says sternly, "you do not realise what you are doing. It is wicked."

But she shrugs her shoulders and drops another.

"Do you hear what I say," he mutters, grasping her wrist. "I'll have no more of this. Look at that poor fellow's eyes; why, he would like to murder you. It is enough to call down the judgment of Heaven upon us."

"Just one more, only five centimes, Philip, and the man shall have all that is left in my purse."

"No," he replies, still retaining her arm in an iron grip.

"Don't; you hurt me."

He removes his hand, and with a defiant look Eleanor

She is standing gazing on them joyfully.

flings the coin into the lake, watching it whirl below with redoubled interest.

"Gott!" mutters the boatman under his breath, "what tevilry."

Then, without a sign of shame, Eleanor passes a handful of money to the sunburnt fellow, casting a smile of ineffable sweetness upon him.

"For the little ones," she says.

But Philip's brow is still black.

"It was wicked," he repeats.

Eleanor only laughs.

"You deserve to want in the future."

"The future," she replies lightly, "who thinks of the future? It may be dark enough to frighten the very life out of you—a thing to make you scream——"

Philip shudders. Storm clouds are gathering overhead. This is the last day of his honeymoon.

CHAPTER IV.

Life is a Jest.

A great red sun that is warm and kind sinks behind the golden trees, rich with autumnal tints, as Philip and Eleanor drive up to "Lyndhurst," on Richmond Terrace.

"So this is your home—*my* home?" she cries, her eyes sparkling with delight as they rest on her new abode. "Ring very loud and long, Philip; I am dying to be in!"

The door is almost immediately opened by a buxom maiden with rosy cheeks and a lenient smile, which alights on the youthful mistress. Eleanor bounds into the hall, and waves a feather boa joyfully over her head.

"Hurrah! *Ancestors*," she cries, saluting the old pictures on the wall with mock courtesy. "Real dead ancestors in wigs, and you *never* told me, Philip!"

She is standing, gazing on them joyfully as the luggage is brought in, pointing with her umbrella at a wrinkled judge.

Her husband smiles, and takes the umbrella from her.

"They have seldom received such admiration," he says gently. "Poor old things, they disfigure the walls sadly with their grim faces."

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"The lady on the left is simpering; and, oh! here is a tiger rug," stumbling over a head on the ground. "I caught my heel on his nose," as Philip prevents her falling by seizing her elbow.

"Show me which is my room. I am longing to see it," she continues, taking two steps at a time in her eager ascent. "Sarah," calling to her maid, "bring those three hat boxes and my cloak, there's a good soul! Come on, Philip, I'll race you to the top."

He feels as if he is playing with a child, as he rushes over the house after Eleanor. The day of the school treat returns to his mind, he fancies he sees her still, running through the long grass.

"Everything is beautiful," she gasps, clasping her hands. "There's a room to be frivolous and lazy in, a study for book learning (I'm going to read no end) and, oh! if you want to sing——"

She draws a deep breath at the remembrance of the grand piano in the drawing-room. "It is ever so much bigger than the one at the vicarage, which was always out of tune. I'll get my cousin Joe to send me a list of songs, and we will buy a harmonium, too, Philip. I can play the harmonium splendidly."

"I am glad you are pleased, Eleanor," he replies, kissing her upturned face.

"And now, I am going to dress, for I feel horrible after my journey. May I ring for Sarah?"

"Of course. What a question! Do exactly as you like with your own servants."

She finds Sarah in her room busily unpacking.

"Oh! there you are," cries Eleanor. "I forgot I had given you my keys. It is such a blessing to be able to talk in English, that foreign stuff was awful, I could not speak a word! Yes, I will wear my lovely pink tea-gown—did you ever see anything so pretty, Sarah? I must make you put it on some day, just to show how it looks on another person. You are a bit stouter than I am though, but perhaps you could pull in——"

And so Eleanor rattles on, just as if Sarah were one of the farm-servants at home, and she the same unaffected light-hearted Miss Grebby.

"Are you happy, Eleanor?"

"Do you come from the country, Sarah?" she asks at last.

"Yes, ma'am. My father's a grocer, and mother keeps house for the doctor's children in our next village."

"Then they don't live together?"

"No, ma'am, it's father's temper. We ~~nere~~ of us can't live at home, he is that hasty! It ain't safe, ma'am, it ain't really!"

"How dreadful," sighs Eleanor. "Doesn't it frighten you?"

"Lor! yes, ma'am. I have seen him grow purple round the eyes, and crimson in the cheeks, and throw a whole sack of flour through the window."

Eleanor receives the information with an expressive "Oh!" as she shakes down her hair, and tells Sarah to brush it.

"How many servants have I got?" gazing at her face in the mirror contentedly.

"Three, ma'am. There's me, and Judith, and cook."

"Do you like Richmond?"

"Well enough, ma'am, thank you, but Judith would have rather been in London, and cook has always set her face against the suburbs."

"Then why did they come?"

"Well, you see, ma'am, the gentleman engaged them, and he seemed that put about they hadn't the heart to refuse."

"Good gracious! whatever is that noise?"

"The dinner gong. Judith is very strong in the arms, and she do make it sound, ma'am!"

"Light a few more candles; I want to have a good look at myself."

His wife Eleanor walks up and down before the glass, with spasmodic gasps of satisfaction, till Philip comes to the door to see if she is ready.

Eleanor walks up and down before the glass.

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Eleanor is brimming over with conversation during the evening meal; she has something to say about everything, and her ideas seem to expand over each fresh course. At the soup she wants a pony cart, but over the fish decides on a brougham and Victoria. The *entrée* introduces a pair of prancing chestnuts, and Philip is quite afraid that the arrival of the meat will suggest powdered footmen in silk stockings.

"You see, dear," he explained at dessert, when Sarah and Judith have left the room, "I have a very comfortable income to live in a fairly luxurious style without undue extravagance. We can easily keep one horse and man, which I have waited to choose with you."

"I see," replies Eleanor, peeling a banana. There is a pause, then she looks up and repeats uncertainly: "I see, Philip."

"You will try and make a good little housekeeper and manage everything splendidly. I often think of you, Eleanor, in your peaceful domesticity at Copthorne. How quiet it was, and——"

"How *dull!*" (sighing).

It all comes back with a rush—the pewter dinner service, and spotless parlour, smelling of lavender and soap, the cackle of hens and lowing of cows. Eleanor pushes aside the dish of bananas, "Let us go out in the moonlight," she says. "It is lovely in the garden, and you can smoke. Let me light your cigar," striking a match on the sole of her velvet slipper, and narrowly escaping burning her pink silk train.

"You must not do that, dear, it is dangerous," remonstrates Philip.

"Oh, no! not if you put up your foot so," illustrating her meaning by striking another. "What is that pretty yellow stuff you are drinking?"

"Chartreuse."

Eleanor kneels down by his side and sips out of his glass. "What queer tasting stuff; not half as nice as elderberry wine!"

"Don't you like it?"

"No; it's almost as nasty as the cowslip tea I used to make. But do come for a stroll, I like wandering about in this long silk gown, it feels so grand."

"Master's been home an hour."

"What myriads of stars!" exclaims Philip, who is well versed in astronomy. "Don't they make you feel like a mere atom, Eleanor, when you think they are all worlds?"

"No, I never bother my head about stars. I like moonlight, it's so pretty, and the moonbeams look ghostly and fairylike. But isn't it cold in the garden? I only just realise that summer is over, and what an eventful summer it has been for me! The other girls at Copthorne were mad with jealousy at my wedding. They all want to marry gentlemen now, and come to London. Do you remember the schoolchildren, Philip? How they scattered flowers and crowded round to kiss me. I gave them my wedding cake (or rather what was left of it) when we went, and the three cheers for 'Teacher,' is quite the nicest recollection." Eleanor's passionate love for children pleases her husband, it shows that her nature is good. He puts his arm lovingly round her as they return to the house.

"Are you happy, Eleanor?" he whispers. A soft brightness creeps into her eyes.

"Yes, Philip, there isn't a lighter heart in Richmond!"

* * * * * *

"Oh! dear, more cards! I returned the doctors' wives visits yesterday, three of them, Philip—each intent on her husband's business, I suppose. Two were at home, and I looked so aggravatingly healthy. I could not think what to talk about, having never done that sort of thing before. The first mercifully had a dog, which I admired for a quarter of an hour, the second showed me her pigeons. I knew all about *them*."

Philip looked at the latest cards which Eleanor handed him.

"Mrs. Mounteagle," he read, "why she is the lady next door. I don't want you to know her, Eleanor. She has not the best of names in Richmond; this place teems with scandal! I am acquainted with half-a-dozen people who positively cram it down your throat whenever you are unfortunate enough to meet them."

"And what have they against Mrs. Mounteagle?"

"Well, my dear, nothing alarmingly serious, only she is rather a fast widow, and not a nice companion for you. She has a queer set at her house, and is almost too 'up-to-date' even for Richmond society."

"But since she has called, Philip, and we live next door, what am I to do?"

"It is awkward, certainly. I should leave cards, and not ask if she is in. That is about the best hint if you don't desire her acquaintance."

"She will think me so horrid," sighs Eleanor, "but I will do as you wish."

The following afternoon Eleanor, card-case in hand, rings at Mrs. Mounteagle's, prepared to carry out her husband's suggestion.

A soft voice singing in the garden arrests her attention. It is the sweetest sound Eleanor has ever heard. Light footsteps crunch the gravel, and a slim, dark woman approaches with slumbrous eyes, which look at the visitor dreamily. A smile, like a fitful flame, flickers over Mrs. Mounteagle's face, suddenly bursting into a bright expression of ill-concealed amusement at Eleanor's nervous demeanour.

"Mrs. Roche," she exclaims, holding out a welcoming hand. "You see, being such near neighbours, I know you already by sight. I am sure if you are only just married

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you must find first calls most boring and tedious. But I am very glad you selected this afternoon to return mine, for I am simply pining to talk to someone. The dead leaves and general decay out here gives one the blues. Come in, and help me to appreciate my first fire."

Eleanor has utterly forgotten her husband's wishes, till she finds herself in a softly-cushioned rocking chair, with her feet on Mrs. Mounteagle's brightly-polished fender. Then she remembers—and ignores.

Never has any woman fascinated her as the lovely widow she is asked not to know. What sparkling conversation! and, oh, what a dainty tea service and piping hot cakes the footman places between them as they talk.

The room is far prettier than Eleanor's boudoir which she has hitherto considered such a dream of beauty. More than once Mrs. Roche suggests going, but the widow intreats her to remain.

"It is so delightful to have you!" she declares, with exuberant cordiality. "I have done nothing all the afternoon but lie on this sofa and yawn over a novel. I could have written it better myself, and that foolish librarian at Mudie's recommended it. I drive to town nearly every afternoon—there is always something to buy or something to see. Are you fond of London, Mrs. Roche?"

"I hardly know, I have been there so little. I lived in the country before my marriage, and was positively buried."

"It is a mercy then that Mr. Roche found you, and dug you up."

"Yes. I like married life much better."

"Spinsterhood is a mistake," retorts Mrs. Mounteagle. "If you have the misfortune to be thrown back upon yourself—widowed in your prime—take my advice and marry again. We poor weak little women were not made to take care of ourselves. We want a stronger arm to lean on—someone who will think for us, anticipate our every wish, load us with all the good things of this earth, and kiss us to sleep when we die!"

Eleanor listens admiringly to this superior mind.

"I shall re-marry," continues Mrs. Mounteagle, "but not immediately. I am practically 'growing my husband.' He is still young in years, though old in frivolity, or vice, whichever you like to call it. He must have his fling before he settles down, or I shall only be binding a burden on my shoulders."

Eleanor attends with deepening interest.

"I married very young," continues Mrs. Mounteagle, "and my husband was nearly eighty. Yes," noting her visitor's surprise, "rather a difference in our ages, wasn't there?

"Love, my dear Mrs. Roche, is a science; you can learn it with careful study, and make it always accommodating, pleasant, and never vulgarly effusive. Do not imagine that the first bloom of youth gleans all the peaches, leaving only apples for after years. A clever woman seldom grows old. She erases Time with the same nimble fingers with which she creates her boudoir, and makes it appear part of her being. You admire my sanctum, and small wonder. It has cost me sleepless nights as long as the furniture bills. I invented it. These chairs for instance were not arranged, they *occurred*. The minutest detail has positively been prayed over. Look at my quaint treasures! If other hands had placed them they might appear ignoble, debased. You see the curve of this pillowed couch, the tint of the curtains, it is *Art* Mrs. Roche, Art with a big *A*."

"I am dreadfully envious," cries Eleanor, "there is no artistic genius in me."

"It must be born in the blood, but if you like I will 'compose' you a room. It shall be like a melody (if you can grasp the comparison)—subtle, entrancing."

"You are *wonderful!*" says Eleanor solemnly.

The light is fading fast, only the soft glow of the fire filters through the gloom.

"It is all so like a fairy palace, and you are the fairy, Mrs. Mounteagle."

"Then, in the guise of a mysterious gnome, let me give you a word of warning. You are a stranger in Richmond, pray take care not to get into a clique. They are so numerous and unhealthy, so full of civil wars and petty strife, that existence becomes poisoned, and all the romance of life is swept aside, seared, wasted!"

"Thank you," replies Eleanor, rising reluctantly and giving Mrs. Mounteagle both her hands. "How good you have been to me to-day!"

"I hope we shall see a great deal of each other," answers the widow softly, "and be very great friends."

"It shan't be my fault if we are not," responds Mrs. Roche.

They part.

"Oh, ma'am! Master's been home an hour, and he's frightened to death about you."

Thus Sarah greets her on her return.

(To be continued.)

IF ANY READER OF

SHORT STORIES

WOULD LIKE TO PUT

£250 in his pocket

It is worth his while to look inside the February number of

Pearson's Magazine.

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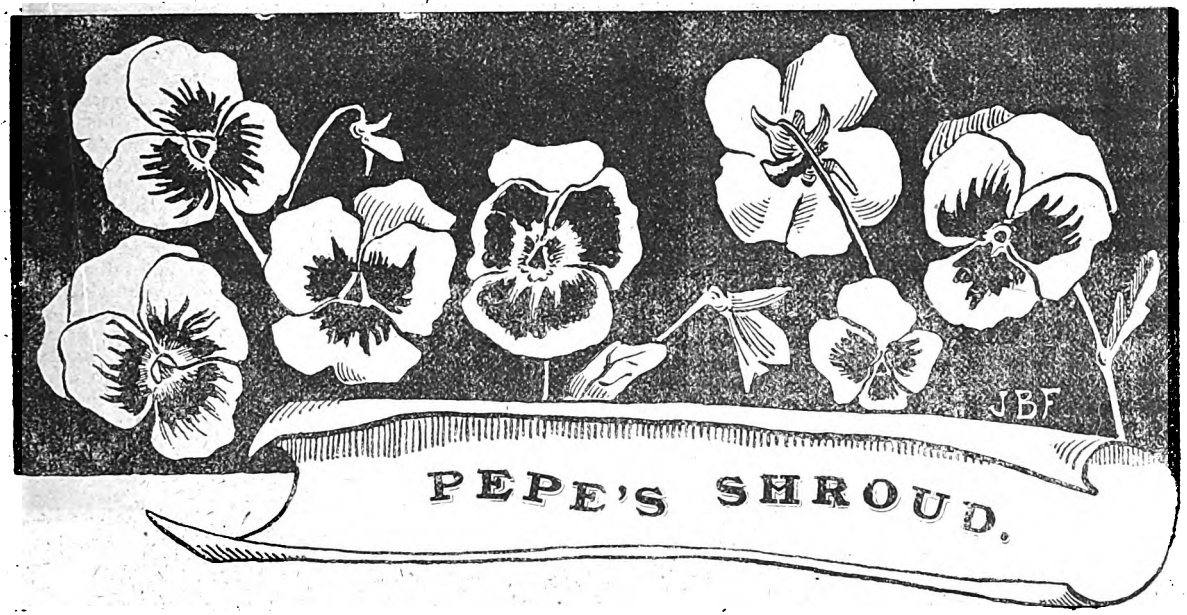

PEPE MURHUA was, perhaps, the most popular young man in San Felipe. He was a singularly cheery lad, and to his unfailing good spirits, no doubt, owed much of his popularity, rather than to his many qualities of greater sterling worth. But the trait which excited most interest among his compeers of his own age and sex was his dauntless, daring courage. None so reckless as Pepe when the amateurs took the bullring for some *function* whose funds were devoted to charitable or patriotic purposes; none pushed his horse to such strenuous efforts nor clung so persistently to the game at the *coleadero*, when the young bloods of the community pitted their strength one against another in "tailing the bull."

And brave he was, too, in emergencies in which the soul is less highly keyed to heroism than in such stimulating phases of dash and enthusiasm. Facing calmly and in cold blood men maddened by drink or passion, or else turning a bold, defiant front to the lawless gentry infesting, in his day, the district, Pepe demonstrated ever his self-possession and courageous spirit.

A group of Pepe's friends had had his attributes under discussion, one miserable Sunday afternoon, when the sudden intermittent gusts of rain, and the dusty wind had driven them to shelter from the rather bleak alameda, where to day no carriages dashed under the garrulous cottonwoods, nor demure, dark-eyed maidens paced the gravelled ways, or perched, like gay birds, upon the massive stucco benches. The coterie had betaken themselves to the house of Don Enrique Soto, at the instance of Federico, his son, who sat brimming their glasses with the cordial wine of Parras —to the disdain, be it admitted, of divers supercilious spirits, who would have been vastly better contented with any poor, thin liquor, so only that it should bear a foreign label.

"I tell you, comrades all," cried Pablo Nuñez, "this fine fellow, Pepe, gets credit for valour he does not know. In all these feats of strength that he performs, he knows he is at an advantage by virtue of his limber and strong muscles. But the true test of courage will be a case where he is on an equality with others—with all the world. How would he behave during an earthquake, when his tremendous strength would avail him nothing? How long would he stand before an intangible shape—a phantom?"

At that a shouted chorus of laughter ascended from the circle of young men.

"*Por Dios!* Pablo, dost thou believe in phantoms? But what ghosts hast thou seen? Come, tell us a tale —a story—a legend. A pretty business this—that Pablo has grown credulous of ghosts—he who was wont to scoff at aught that he could not touch, regarding the doctrines of the church even as the superstitious dreams of ignorant women. Oh, Pepe!" cried the merry crew, deriding as the favourite came to the door, "here is meat for thy mirth! Here is Pablo grown superstitious!"

Pepe smiled when the babbling spirits explained the situation, not failing, either, to mark the point that the question had arisen through Nuñez's doubt of Pepe's valour. But smile although he did, Pepe looked serious, too.

"Remember, mates," he said, "that Pablo is from the Sierra, and in the mountains one grows up more inclined to belief in unearthly things—the very influences of Nature, unchanged by the arts of man, tend that way."

"Eh! Pepe to the defence!"

"Well yes, then," said Pepe, "and I do think, moreover, that deep down in every human heart there lurks belief, of less or greater strength, in the supernatural. Some stake their faith on dreams, and some on signs and tokens. Thou, Corvera, didst shiver and leave off playing *mallila* one night last week because Juan Luna came and looked over thy shoulder with his crossed eyes. How many of you will join me to-morrow in a dinner I will give to twelve? Come, speak up, boys. You shall have the fullest spread the town affords, and French wines all. What! are you bashful?"

No man made exuberant haste to accept Murhua's offer to make one of the thirteen; rather, the young fellows looked abashed and guilty.

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"*Ajo*," cried Nuñez. "I told them you'd wear the white plume on some charges. Now, see, Pepe, you rank as the pluckiest fellow in town; will you come to Campo Santo alone to-night?"

"I don't think I am the pluckiest," said Pepe. "There's Juan Carrazco, who faced that mad bull that was charging a crowd in the market place, and Tito Redona, who overcame and tied crazy Sanchez, the butcher, over the dead body of the maniac's son that he had just murdered."

"So you want to dodge the trial by shifting the honours?" said Nuñez tauntingly. "These are all cases where the danger was clear and definite. You will not go to the graveyard?"

"Oh, yes," said Pepe, "I am not given to dodging; I will go. Now, mind you, I am afraid. Yes, comrades, it is true. The unknown is always the thing fullest of horrors, and I find an awful terror in the thought that, as a bare *possibility*, even, somewhat that is gruesome and fearful might befal. But, to my mind, the truest courage lies, not in our reckless, foolhardy exploits, but in fearing a thing and facing it all the same. Come, what do you wish me to do?"

"Let us go now to Campo Santo, and see what shall be the test," and at the word they trooped out and up the street to the dreary graveyard, facing on a forlorn empty square above the alameda, a spot so desolate and forbidding that its mere contemplation would make world-weary humanity willing to cling to life rather than face the destiny of lying in such repellent confines. Death, the Reaper, had garnered ample harvests at San Felipe; his granary was full to overflowing.

The long, whitewashed façade was topped by a cross above the great portal of the *zaguan*, inexplicably wide, since no carriage nor beast of burden ever crosses the threshold. In the long, narrow vestibule, or porch, a chapel was arranged, where, night and day, a lamp burnt before a pictured Holy Family, and its flame threw uncanny reflections upon a row of gleaming ashen-white skulls ranged below.

Passing through this species of *atrium*, the young men, sobered by their surroundings, entered the city of the dead. The graves lay thick as grass-blades, literally overlapping, and almost without exception facing westward. No shrubs, no flowers, or trees enlivened the scene; only the *débris* of dried bouquets from the annual decoration on All Souls' Day, which had fallen a fortnight previous, and here and there a harsh, glaring wreath of yellow and black immortelles. Some of the monuments were stately and handsome, but the majority were flat, low-lying stones, carved with no particular skill or taste, and often with defective orthography. Some of the humbler sort were built of masonry, and painted in crudest, vividest tones of blue or green, picked out with weather-tarnished gilding.

A fair proportion of the monuments bore the letters "D.P.," which indicated the right of the tenants to slumber there undisturbed in perpetuity, instead of suffering exhumation like the less-favoured, whose mouldering bones, at the end of four of five years, would be unearthed and thrown into the common receptacle of the *huescario*.

So depressing was the place, that the visitors, as with one accord, and an instinct of self-defence, lighted fresh cigarettes, and puffed vigorously, until they created a cloud of fragrant blue smoke to mingle with the murky atmosphere. They picked their way with what reverence of tread they might to a section of the northern wall, where the plaster was crumbling away from the adobes, while here and there in the scarred expanse were tablets bearing, besides name and date, the legend, "Slain by the Savage," in mournful suggestion of the days, not so long gone by, when the Indians had been wont to swoop in fierce raids into the city's very streets.

Then Nuñez, still acting as spokesman, turned to Pepe.

"Wilt thou come here at midnight and drive a nail into this wall?"

"I will do it," answered Pepe, "but with reluctance, as you know."

Then, after the inevitable chatter and chaff, the crowd lounged homeward.

It was perhaps ten o'clock when they reassembled at Pablo Nuñez's office, deeming it indiscreet to start such undertaking from the *salon de billar* or any more public point. Pepe looked a little pale and eerie, but nevertheless came gallantly forward. At the last, Clemente Allande, Pepe's bosom friend, tried to dissuade him from the enterprise.

"'Tis a rash and useless thing, *hombre*. Give it up. If aught were to be gained by the going, *vaya!* But to gratify the jealous malice of an envious soul like Pablo, why shouldst thou risk thy life? For at night the exhalations from the graves are more than ever noxious, and thou mayest get typhus or heaven knows what from breathing them."

The plea was potent with Pepe, who had all the usual horror which Mexicans feel for the air of night, never stirring abroad after dusk without muffling his mouth and nostrils in the folds of a silken handkerchief, through which he breathed. "But—I cannot recede now," he said; "cease to dissuade me, Clemente. It may be that the example will be salutary. Seeing that I undertake, for the sake of reason and courage, a thing I dislike and fear, the boys may perhaps be impelled to act with less absolute obedience to their own preferences. We Mexicans of the younger generation are a selfish lot. Give me the hammer," he added, turning back to the others, as he threw the point of his cloak over his shoulder.

This wrap of Pepe's was one of his whims—an affectation, said the malicious. But it was not that. The intense patriotism of the young fellow made him cling to the long Spanish cape of his forefathers—surely the most graceful garment a man can wear—while his comrades disported themselves in overcoats or ulsters of the latest French or English cut.

Throwing, then, over his shoulder one long end of his *capa*, and tucking under its drooping folds the hammer and the big clumsy spike, Pepe stepped away in the darkness, up the gloomy street between the low houses, whose dark, forbidding façades gave no promise of the kindly hospitality to be found within.

"He is gone," said Clemente Allande, re-entering the house. "I saw him turn the corner of the 'Green Devil.'"

"You should not have watched him out of sight," said one of the young men; "that brings evil fortune."

"Now, croak, you!" snapped Clemente viciously, in the stress of his nervous foreboding, and went out to stand alone in the chilled *patio*, more and more deploring Pepe's undertaking. "And I might have prevented it if I had not been a fool," he muttered. "What easier than to have sent a hint to the *Jefatura*, and the prefect would have so moved that the guard of the graveyard would have missed his stolen key and watch

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would have been kept. Better that Pepe should pay a *multa*, or even take a turn in the lock-up, rather than get diphtheria or typhus in the miasmas among the graves!" Then the others came out laughing, and dragged him to the card-table, where still he would not play, but sat glowering at the game.

An hour passed by, another, and Allande could bear it no longer, but sprang to his feet with an oath of disturbance.

"Two hours and Pepe not here! Some evil has assailed him! We must go to his relief."

"And find him snugly in bed," sneered Pablo Nuñez; "he has been home an hour, or—*quien sabe?*—perhaps he was not so scrupulous as to go to the graveyard at all!"

"It does not particularly become you, Nuñez, to sneer and throw aspersions on Pepe's courage, when it is at your instigation he has gone into this absurd and useless adventure. It might be interesting to seek a cause for your pique against him!"

"One need not go far for that," murmured another of the young men; "only down to the corner of Guadalupe, where Aurelia Miramontez lives."

"At all events," said Clemente, "I shall go to Pepe. You who will may come. However, I have no faith in ghosts, and I can go alone."

But the crowd were fairly shamed by Allande's spirit, and moved by self-reproach and also, no doubt, by curiosity, they trooped out with him, barring only Nuñez, who slunk away to his bed. The graveyard paths were dismal in their stark bareness, that left the palpable darkness unrelieved, and pressing like material substance on the pilgrims.

The leader stopped short as he rounded a tall and massive monument that concealed the particular space of wall where their quest lay. Something undoubtedly was there, a denser concrete shape against the formless blackness of the night, and the shadows from the wall. Something, too, in human semblance, and in the uncertain light shed by the lantern's flame, flickering and waving in the riotous gale, it seemed to struggle and writhe, as if in mortal throes, or else in the strain of combat. Clemente dashed forward with one wild cry.

"Pepe! oh, Pepe! To the rescue."

He reached the spot, and but one figure was there; bowing and swaying, bending, and reeling in fantastic movement, as if wrestling with its own shadow, projected in grotesque, unearthly proportions upon the wall. Clemente threw his arms about the other's waist, and strove to restrain and drag him aside. A passive and inert but powerful resistance was the result. By this time the others had gathered round, and one of them threw the lantern's rays full on Pepe Murhua's face. Then a cry of fear and horror went up from all throats, so ghastly was that pallid countenance, set in the rigid lines of mortal agony and despair.

"Will you not help to free him?" cried Clemente. "Are you all paralysed? Come! see what holds him, so I can lay him down. I think he is grasping something on the wall."

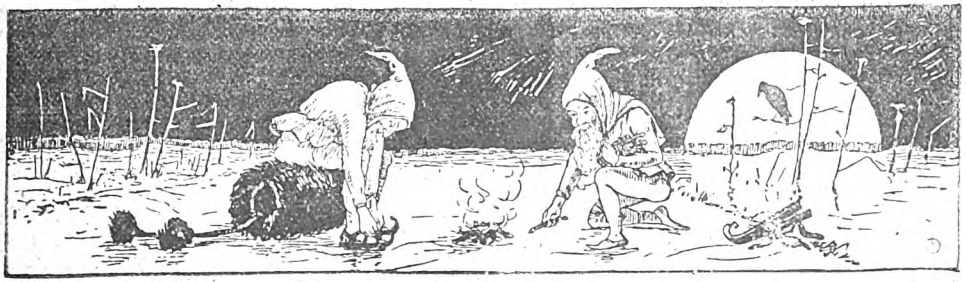
But none of the panic-stricken crew would move, and Clemente himself, still supporting the other, sought to reach along the rigid arms, to detach them from their hold. Both arms hung free; one stiffened hand still held the heavy hammer. Then, with a sudden light breaking on his mind, the faithful Clemente caught at the folds of the ample Spanish cape, flapping and waving airily in the wind, and tried to tear them away from the form of his friend. The resistance which he encountered confirmed his belief, that had taken shape tardily, thanks to the dim and shifting, uneven light.

With a few words of explanation which deprived the incident of its supernatural aspect, he rallied his stiffened companions, prompt enough to act where only material forces were concerned. The nature of the occurrence was plain. Blown by the fitful wind, the folds of Pepe's cloak had been pierced by the heavy spike, whose broad, flat head had effectually held the strong cloth and pinned the young man to the wall. Alone there in the night with such awesome circumstances of time and place, the conditions had unbalanced his judgment when he had seemed to find himself in the grasp of something, unseen, unheard.

Nor had the poor lad succumbed to fear alone. The family physician of the Murhuas had long ago diagnosed a weakness of the heart, brought on or aggravated by Pepe's prowess in field sports, and any excess of mental or spiritual emotion must have resulted fatally. The knowledge of his condition had been kept from Pepe with a view to averting the fate that enlightenment might have spared him.

He was buried near the spot where death had met him, but his name is not forgotten. The graceful fashion of the Spanish cloak is coming into favour in Mexico, but never can be found a youth of San Felipe who will don the garment that is known as "the shroud of Pepe Murhua."

Y. H. Addis.



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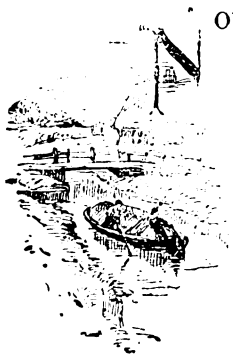
TAKING HIM DOWN.



OW, Miss—er—er Miss——"

"Fosdick."

"Thanks very much. Now, Miss Fosdick, in commencing your work as a typewriter for the firm of Poplin and Son, it is necessary for me to instruct you as to your duties. I have charge of the house's correspondence—entire charge. My name, Miss Fosdick, is Hipple."

"Yes, Mr. Hipple," the girl meekly replied.

"In the first place," Mr. Hipple went on, leaning back in his chair so as to expand his chest to its utmost capacity, and twisting the ends of his moustache with both hands as he spoke, "in the first place I always insist on my typewriter taking me down *verbatim et literatim*. I suppose you know what that means. It's Latin,' he added condescendingly.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, Miss Fosdick, I have had the house's correspondence in my hands for several years, and both Messrs. Poplin have come to rely implicitly upon me. Indeed, I do not really see how this department could move along without me."

The girl's grey eyes looked at the indispensable clerk with an amused twinkle.

"I think I can say, Miss Fosdick," the young man proceeded, as he settled more comfortably in his chair, "and I think I can say it without the slightest egotism or desire to boast, that I have made the letters of Poplin and Son famous throughout the business world as models of English composition and ornate diction."

The clerk watched the countenance of his new assistant closely, to note the impression of his words.

Miss Fosdick nodded understandingly and smiled. It was a sweet smile, for she could not smile any other sort had she tried.

"Those are the reasons why I always insist on absolute accuracy on the part of my typewriter. I do not permit even the alteration of a single word or any other change whatever. I trust you comprehend me clearly."

"Quite so, Mr. Hipple."

"Then we will begin."

Mabel Fosdick's first day's work was perfectly satisfactory to the hypercritical correspondence clerk. He found himself taken down with unvarying accuracy. In the transcribed letters the words were spelt all correctly. She never struck the wrong character on her machine—a fault so common among typewriters, and one which sometimes helped to make type-written communications resemble Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Thanks to Miss Fosdick's skill, Mr. Hipple's specimens of ornate English composition went forth into the business world more faultlessly than ever, and aided in making smooth the rough places of commercial epistolary communication.

The firm of Poplin and Son had been served by a masculine typewriter, but the style of the correspondence clerk had become too oppressive for him, and he had resigned. This was exactly what Mr. Hipple wished, for he longed for a typewriter with laughing eyes and golden hair upon whom to lavish the flowers of language—such a being as he had read about in the funny papers. At last he had found one to suit him, after much examination of applicants, in the person of Miss Fosdick.

Everything went on with apparent smoothness for about a month. The members of the firm noted with approval the modest demeanour of their new typewriter, and the other male clerks of the establishment envied Hipple his pleasant duties.

One day the elder Mr. Poplin sent for Miss Fosdick to come to his private office.

"Sit down, please," he said, when she arrived; "I have here a letter from my friend Mr. Shaw, of Shaw and King, who says that a communication from this firm contains much irrelevant matter."

Poplin looked over his glasses at Miss Fosdick, and found her blushing, with eyes cast down. He asked not unkindly:

"Did you write a letter to that firm lately?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you know its character?"

"Yes, sir."

"What have you to say about it?"

"I wrote it down just as Mr. Hipple dictated it, sir."

"So I supposed, after reading it; but is it not rather unusual to insert in letters extraneous remarks made during dictation?"

"He has always insisted on being taken down *verbatim et literatim*, sir," the pretty typewriter went on, with some confusion; "and, really, sir, Mr. Hipple has annoyed me so much with his attention, and has refused to desist, that I felt I must do something to crush him. I'm sorry I took the method I did—I oughtn't to—oh, dear, what shall I do?"

Miss Fosdick put her dainty cambric handkerchief up to her eyes, and her speech dissolved in tears.

"There! there! my dear girl, don't cry," said Mr. Poplin soothingly.

He took her hand to assist in the comforting operation and placed her head on his fatherly shoulder. He was not too old to make mental note of how long her lashes lay on her rosy cheeks, and how dewdrops of tears oozed through them.

"What am I doing?" Mabel exclaimed, as she bethought herself of the picture she and Mr. Poplin would present if anyone should come into the office, and she promptly raised her head.

"You did just right," said Mr. Poplin, referring to her treatment of Mr. Hipple. "The presumptuous rascal! Never mind, little girl—er—Miss Fosdick I'll settle with Mr. Hipple myself. In the meantime you may take a couple of days off. Go home straight away, and I'll see that he annoys you no more."

After the fair typewriter had put on her things and

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gone home, Mr. Hipple was called into the office, and Mr. Poplin asked him:

"Are you in the habit of reading and signing the firm's letters after the typewriter has taken them from your dictation, and transcribed them, Mr. Hipple?"

When Mr. Poplin took the extra time necessary to use the prefix "Mister," in addressing one of his clerks, it was an indication that the subject of the interview was of more than ordinary importance. It was with some perturbation, therefore, that Mr. Hipple replied:

"Well, sir, I used to, but I found Miss Fosdick so scrupulously exact that I lately have permitted her to sign letters dictated to her without my reading them. She takes me down word for word, sir, so I feel that it isn't necessary for me to read the letters over."

"The reason why I asked you that question is this: I received a note from Mr. Shaw this morning—of Shaw and King, you know—in which he asks an explanation of a letter he had just received from this house. Perhaps you can give the needed explanation after I have read you the letter. This is it:

"Gentlemen, — Your favour of Monday was received in due course. Got that down, sweetheart? In reply, we would say—I'd like a sweet kiss from those ruby lips—say that the goods you mention — you charming creature, why are you so cold to me?—mention were shipped yesterday morning. Your birdlike voice thrills me through and through! Why do you never smile on your adorer? Hoping that they have arrived in good condition — give me one kiss, Mabel, darling, won't you?—and that they gave perfect satisfaction — got that down, little beauty—we beg to remain, yours very truly—one kiss now, I insist. What are you struggling for?

"Your obedient servants,
"Poplin and Sons."

Hipple turned alternately red and white while his employer read this letter in icy tones, and said nothing when it was concluded. The occasion did not seem to be one for the display of ornate English composition.

After a painful pause the senior member of the firm went on:

"Mr. Hipple, I think I'll attend to the correspondence of this firm hereafter myself, and what love-making it is necessary to do to the typewriter I will also look after. The cashier will give you your salary to date. Good morning, sir."

"The idea!" exclaimed Mr. Poplin to his son, the junior member, half-an-hour later, when he had laid the whole matter before him. "The idea that a womanly and modest girl like Miss Fosdick should be so grossly mistreated in my establishment exasperates me. She's pretty and sweet, and altogether admirable."

"I rather admire Hipple's taste," replied the son.

"Oh, you do," exclaimed the father. "Then I suppose I have done wrong in discharging the scamp, even when he knew his attentions were distasteful to the girl?"

"No, father, you did quite right. Of course it would not do for that sort of thing to continue."

"Of course it wouldn't. It would be persecution of as sweet a girl as I know."

"Why, you are not in love with her yourself, are you, father?"

"I, a widower of fifteen years' standing? The idea! Can't an elderly man defend a helpless young woman without such an imputation as that?"

"Oh, certainly."

Then the conversation was dropped.

Old Mr. Poplin was in love with Miss Fosdick, nevertheless, and he resolved to ask her to be his son's step-mother on the first opportunity when she should report for duty.

Miss Fodsick returned to her duties at the appointed time, and proceeded straight to the private office. The elder Mr. Poplin was alone.

"Good morning, Mr. Poplin," said Miss Fosdick, with her sweetest smile.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" Mr. Poplin replied, raising his eyes above his newspaper; "sit down, Miss Fosdick, please. Before you take the lid off your typewriter, I have something—er—important. I have been thinking of you almost constantly since you went away two days ago, and I wanted to—er—ask you——"

"One moment, please, Mr. Poplin," Miss Fosdick interrupted him to say, "you must pardon me, but I have not come back to work."

"Eh? What's that?"

"No, sir. Fact is—I—that is—your son, sir, has done me the honour to—to—propose, and —and——"

"The sly rascal," ejaculated Poplin, not giving her a chance to finish. "Well, I suppose I'll have to be a father to you, and I will say that I am extremely proud of my new daughter."

Then he thought, "I wonder if she really suspected what I was going to say?" H. L. C.

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MADAME ✣ CAPRICE.

Translated from the French of Gilbert Dore.

"DING! Dong!" Maurice Marsy laid down his palette and ran to the door, which he softly opened. A flower-decked hat with a rosy face under it appeared in the shadow of the staircase, and Madame Denise Ligneron entered the room with the laugh of a joyous child. As a spattered sparrow dries his feathers after the rain and turns about and plumes himself, his wings vibrating, his neck strained, she smoothed out her crumpled draperies, rustling her silken skirts about her and fluttering her ribbons as she bent before the almost finished picture on the easel.

Maurice had carefully closed the door. He contemplated for a moment the pretty silhouette of the young woman, from the flowers on her hat to the points of her polished shoes, his look enveloping with silent caresses the little piquant, provoking and charming person of Madame Ligneron. The studio was neither large nor elegant. It did not contain any of the rare and expensive collections found in celebrated studios, where the painter receives beautiful women and respectful reporters. Several moulds and casts, some studies without frames, some hangings thrown over easel frames, a classic divan, a few rustic seats besides a large rocking-chair composed the unpretentious furniture of the room.

The master himself, young, with a manner at once energetic and sweet, did not seem, in his working costume, a man of great fortune, but for him the springtime and the sun entered his studio with the lady in mauve.

The studio seemed illuminated about her. An aroma of unknown flowers emanated from her clothing, and before the eyes of the artist troops of cupids danced fantastically round his easel.

Which signifies, speaking without metaphor, that Maurice Marsy was in love.

"Well, are you satisfied?" he asked, approaching the young woman as she stood regarding his picture.

"It is good; it is excellent," she replied. "A little too mystic for my taste, but I congratulate you all the same."

In truth, this Joan of Arc, the peasant listening to the voices in a dream under the light of a silvery moon, did not appeal strongly to Madame Ligneron.

This pretty person, whom her intimate friends called Madame Caprice, infinitely preferred the draper's shop of the Louvre to the art gallery of the same name. Under the aureole of blonde hair and the Parisian toilette she hid a little, mediocre and prosaic soul, without virtues or vices—one of those souls which Nature seems to create by the dozen, without the aid of God or the Devil.

A widow, comfortably rich and very libéral, Madame Caprice had striven to merit her name. She brought together in her *salon* a little circle of adorers, nearly all young, nearly all artists, and all amusing.

Her imperturbable aplomb, her parrot-like memory, and a certain feminine *finesse*, permitted her to give to many people the illusion of an intelligent, delicate, benevolent coquette, who was seductive through her very faults.

One day, when she had regarded

The young man remained standing.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA
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Marsy curiously while speaking of the irresistible seduction which talent exercises upon the feminine heart, the good fellow felt a heretofore unknown wish born in his soul, to work and conquer.

"I will be somebody—I will be great—I will be celebrated—she will love me," he thought. And all the winter, at the price of a thousand privations, with beautiful ardour and obstinate courage, he worked on his Joan of Arc.

Now the almost completed work, conceived and executed in love, awaited only the finishing touches. On the moon-bathed meadow-land, the blonde shepherdess, her corsage modestly laced across her breast, listened to the voices of the night. Behind her the recumbent forms of animals were barely visible. A fairylike mystery enveloped the scene, and fell upon the kneeling virgin; a transparent shadow poetised the sleeping village; the heavens seemed starred with legends, and in spite of some incongruities, which perhaps gave the picture a more charming originality, Maurice Marsy might well be content.

"Will you permit me to make a few more finishing touches?" said he to Madame Ligneron, who, with half-closed eyes was feigning the concentrated observation of an old expert.

"It will amuse me to see you work," she said, as she seated herself in an immense armchair.

The young man remained standing, his palette in his hand, putting some light touches on the clothing of Joan of Arc.

"There, isn't that better? See, I have given more importance to the luminous reflection, but there is still a crudeness in the background that must be remedied."

His brush caressed the canvas with a respectful precaution. The fever of creation darkened the grey of his clean frank eyes, and Madame Caprice all at once became aware that this great strapping fellow, simple and credulous though he might be, was not at all disagreeable to look upon.

She knew that this young enthusiast was in love with her. When the day came that he should speak, what an amusement it would be to play with the heart of the great boy. To tease, to irritate, to madden, and then to calm him with a smile. Sport delicious, sport eternal, wherein the pretty little ladies with innocent eyes have excelled from infancy upward.

"There!" said Maurice, "we will rest awhile now," and with one last loving look at his Joan of Arc he came and sat down on a low stool close beside Madame Ligneron, who was half pouting to find herself occupying a second place in his thoughts.

"How good you were to come to-day," he said.

"Was I not? It is so hot to-day, and this early spring weather always fatigues me; but I would not break my promise to come and see your picture. You have a great deal of talent, Monsieur Marsy. You are a great artist."

"A great painter! Oh, no," said he, somewhat troubled by the enormity of her praise; "but after many years and much toil I hope to become great."

He grew animated and related his life to her—his laborious toil, his ambitions, his troubles, his lonely sorrows. He was so unhappy having no one to love him in this world. No one to be proud of him.

"What! Not a father, not a mother, not a sister, not a sweetheart——"

He looked her in the face resolutely: "No one," he said.

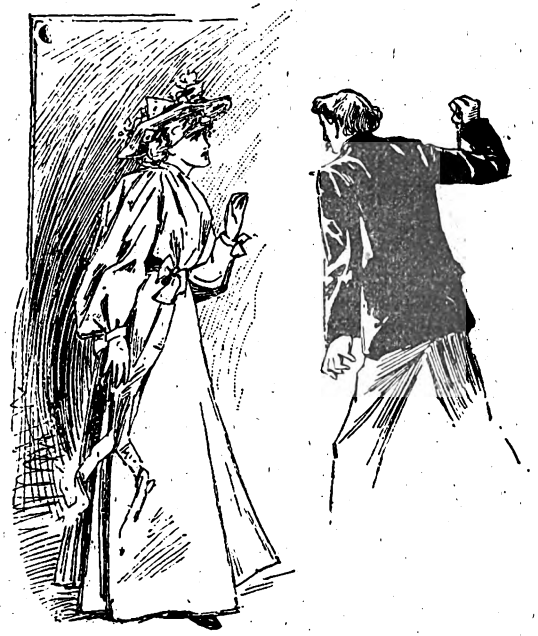
"It is perhaps your own fault," she responded, smiling.

"My fault! How so?"

"Have you such a hard heart, or are there no longer any pretty girls in the world—amiable models, for instance, who would find it a pleasure to console you?"

His cheek coloured as he answered quickly: "No, Madame, those of whom you speak do not exist for me; as for my heart"—he lifted his eyes and he saw in her blue orbs an excessive curiosity that rendered them almost tender; as he saw her red mouth, her blonde cheek leaning towards him. The spring sunshine illuminated the window, flooding the studio with joyous radiance. A bouquet of flowers from a corner exhaled a double aroma. The light, the perfume and love mounted to poor Maurice's head.

"My heart, Madame," he murmured, "is no longer mine; you have it—alas! you have it entirely," and he pressed his burning lips feverishly upon the ungloved hand of Madame Denise Ligneron.



He took a step towards her.

The first movement of the woman who receives an unexpected declaration—if there is such a thing as an unexpected declaration—is always surprise and the feigning of a noble indignation. Madame Caprice, who had foreseen, prepared, and even provoked the declaration from Maurice, felt obliged to rise with an air of offended dignity, which was nevertheless belied by the malicious pleasure of her eyes and lips, as she ejaculated:

"Monsieur—Monsieur Marsy, who has given you permission to be so presuming?"

"Ah, Madame, Madame," cried the young man without freeing the hands that he held, "is it necessary that I should put into words at this moment all the respect with which you inspire me? My language, my character, my attitude ought to re-assure you. I love you. For months I have burned to tell you so. Circumstances have determined this avowal, which I cannot regret, because it is so sincere. Madame, you are so good, so kind, so intelligent—will you refuse to listen to me?"

After much hesitation Madame Caprice consented to

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sit down, convinced that her living plaything was ready to give her the amusement of witnessing an exalted emotion, all the more droll because she did not participate in it, and Maurice knelt before her without a suspicion of being ridiculed, and commenced his touching confession.

He loved her so much. She was so pretty, so dainty, so artistic. She had so encouraged him. This picture which had cost him so much toil, he never could have finished but for her. During his hours of discouragement, her dear, blonde image had haunted his studio and given him hope. For her sake, and because of her, he would be great. At her little feet he would lay, like flowers, the successes which he would gather for her, if she would love him a little, ever so little. They would have a beautiful life together of tenderness, of pride, of glory—she proud of his talent, he proud of her beauty.

He was intoxicated with his own words—intoxicated by the touch of this young woman, fresh as a young branch of lilacs, and who smiled so kindly upon him. Meanwhile Madame Caprice was silent with mute, ravished vanity.

Oh, if her friends could see him at this moment. If they could hear the eloquent accents of this beautiful boy kneeling at her feet. What a triumph it would be! This man belonged wholly to her. She had conquered and vanquished him. For her he would be willing to sacrifice everything; for her he would set fire to his studio; he would trample upon his paintings, even upon his Joan of Arc. And a malicious, almost wicked, smile drew up the corners of her pretty mouth at this thought.

"Oh, how good you are," cried Maurice, with an ebullition of joy. "You will permit me to hope, will you not?"

The little woman shrugged her shoulders. "No," she said, "for you do not love me."

"Not love you!" exclaimed the painter in amazement.

"No, you do not love me. You are deceived by your artistic imagination, and because I am not displeasing to look upon—because I am interesting to you, you believe yourself to be possessed by a passion which, I fear, is not sincere. I must reserve my heart for one who will be willing to give me proofs——"

"A proof, a proof," cried Maurice. "What can I do to convince you of my love?"

"You love only your painting, and that is your right; it is the artist's nature to seek women for suggestions in art; for sensation that will benefit them in their work. But I am exacting; I wish to be loved for myself, for myself alone, first of all and before all."

"But I adore you. I am capable of any sacrifice to prove it to you."

"Very well, then," said she, with a light laugh. "suppose to convince me it should be necessary to destroy your picture there?"

"I should destroy it at once."

"One says those things, but one never does them."

"Because a woman like you never demands such a sacrifice."

"The greatness of the sacrifice proves the greatness of the love."

"Then you could exact such a test from me?"

"Would you refuse to give it to me?"

"No."

"Be careful. Suppose I should take you at your word?"

"Madame, you are not speaking seriously?"

"Oh, very well," said she, with a touch of disdain in her voice. "You are like all men; just as I thought."

Maurice grew deadly pale. "You do not believe me?" he asked.

"Prove it, then," she said, pointing to his "Joan of Arc."

Maurice gave a sharp, smothered cry: "Ah, coquette, terrible coquette, and if I do this thing you will love me?"

"Yes, Maurice," she answered slowly.

Behind them on the table lay a Japanese dagger, drawn from its sheath, shining in the sun. The eyes of the young man were fixed upon it in a sort of fascination.

"You would love me?" he repeated.

She was so close to him that he could almost feel the breath of her lips as she sighed: "Yes, Maurice, I would love you."

Then he seized the dagger, and in a violent access of rage he lacerated the canvas of his dear, beautiful, divine "Joan of Arc."

* * * * * * *

"Oh, Maurice, you do love me! I believe you, and I —I—how I love you! and how I am so sorry that I made you do this! Maurice, you are not listening to me!"

He was standing with the dagger in his hand, before the *débris* of his picture. A sudden and instantaneous revulsion of feeling had taken place in him. The physical act of destruction had loosened the high tension of his nerves, cooled his ardour, and killed his love. The artist, touched to his very soul, eclipsed the lover. Oh, why had he committed this irreparable folly; and this woman, this vain, imbecile woman, how had he ever loved her?

With a sudden gesture he took a step towards her as though he would drive the dagger into her heart, then threw it across the studio. Startled and surprised, Madame Ligneron drew back, not recognising the Maurice of old in this sombre, menacing man, who stood regarding her with an expression of sorrow, disdain, and disgust.

He went to the door and opened it wide.

"Go out," he said.

She stood as if rooted to the spot by his impoliteness.

"Go!" he repeated with a fierceness that showed the brutal side of his nature. "You have made me commit a cowardly act, a monstrous folly. Is this the price of your love? Then you may keep it for others, with your smiles and promises. I do not want it. Do you hear me? I detest and despise you."

Madame Ligneron grew white with rage.

"You must be both a fool and a maniac to talk in this manner," she said with a forced smile. "I hope that you do not think the sacrifice of your miserable daub was sufficient to make me love you."

* * * * *

And this is how it happens that my friend Maurice Marsy was not represented at the annual exhibition.

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The Price of Betrayal.

"And what do you say your numbers are?"

"Twenty-two, Excellency, myself included."

The chief of the secret police took the paper handed to him, and silently compared it with one in his desk.

"Bardin, Loubanoff, Sobotin—I was not aware of these last. You have done well, Radovitch, and you will find that the Tsar's Government is not unmindful of those who serve it well. Your recent action will atone for your past errors and merit reward besides."

"My life will not be worth a day's purchase if it is known that it is I who have furnished this information."

"You should have thought of that before joining their society. I see you have something to suggest. What is it?"

"That when the seizure by the police takes place no distinction be made between me and the others."

"Of course you will be apprehended with them."

"And tried?"

"Yes, if you wish it, and condemned too, for that matter. Anything further?"

"And pardoned along with the less guilty of the others, so as to avoid all suspicion?"

"I quite understand you. Rest assured you will have no reason for fear in that respect."

The chief of police smiled to himself as the spy took his departure.

That very evening the police raid took place. Taken as they were by surprise and unconscious of any treachery on the part of one of their number, the little coterie of students, artists, and young doctors found themselves bagged, without a single exception. They indignantly denied the charge of conspiring against the government. But General Garashinin's myrmidons merely shrugged their shoulders deprecatingly, perhaps incredulously.

In a month the trial took place. Radovitch was not called to give evidence, but took his place among the accused.

At length the whole twenty-two were adjudged guilty. Twelve were sentenced to Siberia, but not to the mines, as the clemency of the Tsar provided. It was with a thrill akin to horror that Radovitch heard himself sentenced to death, along with the other nine, though conscious that it only formed part of the arrangement that he himself had suggested to General Garashinin.

"Sentence to Siberia would have served the purpose equally well," he muttered to himself, and, turning to look at his companions, he found himself wondering if his own face was as deadly pale as each of theirs.

"To be shot at the glacis of the fortress at sunrise to-morrow morning," he kept repeating to himself, though assuring himself that the words could have no reference to him, for the Tsar must keep troth even with traitors, or none would be found to serve him in future.

Dostoieffsky and the others calmly accepted their fate, and after a hurried farewell to their more fortunate fellows were conducted to their cells for the last time.

The long night passed, all too quickly for him, for whom the messenger he expected so unaccountably delayed. He had seen General Garashinin in court from day to day, and once a glance of intelligence, he persuaded himself, had passed between them.

At last a faint greyness began to manifest itself through the close bars of his cell. It was light, the herald of a new day, the last for the condemned man. And now Radovitch began to explain, in husky tones, that his conviction was all a blunder. The two warders looked intelligently at each other and pityingly upon the wretched prisoner, but said not a word.

In a few minutes all the ten were assembled in the courtyard of the prison, nine of them calm and collected, for the bitterness of death was already past, one a prey of fear and sickening terror, and evidencing it all too plainly in his trembling limbs and livid countenance. In the hurried good-byes they exchanged with each other, Radovitch came in for more than his share of attention.

"It's all a mistake," mumbled the wretched man. "Where is General Garashinin?"

"He is never present at executions," replied the soldier he addressed. "He issued his final orders last night."

And then a melancholy procession began to move towards the glacis of the fortress prison. A priest led the way, holding aloft a large cross before the eyes of the doomed men who followed in single file, their ordinary dress covered with a long robe of white linen, at once a covering for the living and a shroud for the dead.

At last they reached the place appointed. Five stakes had been driven in the ground near the summit of the long even slope of the rampart. To these they were bound in couples, facing the east, now kindling with the warm flush of the rising sun, whose coming was to be the signal for their death. Ranged in front of them, at a distance of fifteen yards, was a company of soldiers with loaded rifles, whose captain, standing a little way apart, held in his hand a white handkerchief, at whose fall sixty tongues of fire would leap forth and sixty bullets seek the hearts of the unhappy men.

There was still time for the last scene but one in the tragedy before the sun should rise. The cross was held before the lips of each man for a final kiss in turn. Then a dagger was broken over their heads by a soldier detailed from the thousands drawn up to witness the vengeance of the Tsar. At that moment the sun seemed to bound into space, and every heart almost stopped.

But the officer has not let the signal handkerchief drop. Instead the retreat is sounded on a score of bugles, and the troops march off the ground. The kneeling men are informed that the Emperor has been graciously pleased to grant them their lives. They are unbound and, as in a dream, try to realise all that has happened and to congratulate one another ere the last couple has been reached. One of these had fallen forward on his face as far as his bonds permitted. It was Radovitch.

"He has fainted," said the soldier. "Bring me some water, sharp."

"No need to trouble," said the doctor, who had rapidly examined him. "He is dead. The fright has killed him."

It was too true. The chief of the secret police had carried out his promise only too literally. The spy had no longer any reason to fear his betrayed comrades' revenge.

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THE LOVE OF CALIBAN.

THE room of Lady Lucrece was full of cool shadows, though it was midsummer, and the purple-bordered linens at the windows swayed in the hot wind. There were purple-bordered linens. too, on the couch where the Lady Lucrece lay—one cannot do much at noontide in Pisa when it is midsummer. The heavens seemed to hang down near to the languorous earth; a palpitant white heat shimmered on the streets; the lazaroni slept; at the bath-houses the attendants went about in shifts of linen; the shops and the stores were silent; it was too hot even to hate. If one had a vengeance to take he waited till nightfall, when it should be cooler. And the Lady Lucrece, fragrant from her bath, lay on her couch amid the fresh linen, and sprinkled powder on her throat to keep the moisture from gathering there.

As the long day wasted itself in languid hours the lady smiled, although it was not her wont.

"How many hours till moonlight?" she asked of her maid.

"Six and more, gracious mistress," replied the maid drowsily; and she wiped her forehead upon her sleeve.

"Ah," sighed the Lady Lucrece, "bring in Massimiliani."

A moment later a queer, halting step was heard on the tiled floor in the hall outside. The curtains at the door were the green which the sea wears in the morning. They parted and Massimiliani stood between them. Had Nature had her way he would have been tall, but some mysterious force had bent him almost double, and his humped shoulders and heavy head hung always towards the earth. He was not merely grotesque, he was hideous. There are men that Nature has jested with—Massimiliani she had cursed. He made a salutation with his hands—he could bend no lower.

"I am for ever bowing," he said to his mistress. "My grace was so great the first time I had occasion to make a salute to a lady, that I was never allowed to rise."

"Who was the lady?" queried his mistress, shutting her eyes as he stood before her.

"Mother Earth." He looked straight down at the Lady Lucrece.

"I do not want gibes this afternoon," said his mistress. Massimiliani spread out his huge dark hands and smiled.

"Then my gracious lady did not send for me?"

"Send for you? Yes, I sent for you."

"It cannot be. You have forgotten. For what am I but a gibe? It cannot be a question of wisdom, or it would not lie between a woman and a fool. Perhaps it was a matter of grace, and you want me to dance; or a matter of beauty, and you wish me to smile; or a question of sweet sounds, and you wish me to sing,"

The Lady Lucrece sat up and put the damp hair back from her brow.

"I had sooner hear a chorus of ravens," she said, but she laughed as she said it. No one minded Massimiliani, and she pulled at the end of his long, hanging sleeve to make him squat upon the floor by her feet, which he did with a mocking gesture.

"Princes have been here before me," said he.

The lady looked haughty, but she was not ill-pleased.

"It does relate to singing," said she.

Massimiliani leapt to his feet and seized some roses that lay at the foot of the couch.

"The flowers!" he cried, and flung them from the casement.

His mistress stared at him in amazement.

"From the Lord Ascanio," she replied mechanically.

"There was a tarantula among them. Are you so good, madam, that your lovers must send you to Heaven?"

"Fool!" cried the lady angrily, "there was no tarantula among the roses."

Massimiliani sat down again upon the floor.

"Go on with your tale," said he, "I am no greater fool than I was before."

The Lady Lucrece sat pondering, with her elbows on her knees, and her flushed cheek in her hands.

"Fool," said the Lady Lucrece, and her breath came faster, "you have not heard, have you——"

"God gave me straight ears, the saints be thanked," the jester sardonically interrupted.

"Night after night, since the summer came, a voice below my window? It always comes when the shadow of the balcony hides his figure."

"That he may not see your face, if you lean out, and so lose his inspiration?" interjected the dwarf. The lady struck him on the ear with her jewelled hand. The blow was light, but the dwarf shivered. "The voice," said he, "what was it like?" The lady fell back again into her old attitude. The flowing sleeves dropped from her arms. The loose strings of pearl with which they were wreathed, tumbled down to her elbows. Massimiliani spread himself flat upon the floor, and bracing his heavy head against his hands, watched her as a tiger does his prey.

"Ah, fool! I think you know I never loved. Men are so little. I could rule them all; I do not want a man that I can rule. But his voice—it sings of war, of great deeds, terrible and grand. And yet, Massimiliani, it sings of love—of love which counts power and money, and name as nothing. It does not sue for love; it demands it as a right. The verses which he sings are no other man's; they are his own, and he weaves them as he sings. He does not mind that I am great, he loves me for my soul, he loves me for my pride, for my will, for my scorn of petty things. He knows me as I am. He is the first living creature who has ever done so. It mounts—this voice—up to my lattice like a vine. It runs through gay melodies like rippling water. It grows as sad as the voice of the night-bird. I weep when it sings of death; I throw up my arms and walk the room, strong as a giant, when it sings of war; and when it sings of love, fool, I bury my face in my arms and blush. All day I lie and dream of it, and in my sleeping dreams at night I hear naught but it. I dream how we shall meet and where. I am sure he must be beautiful."

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A sound from the man at her feet caused her to stop. The fool had rolled on his back in a convulsion of laughter, and the tears trickled down his cheeks.

"Fool!" cried the lady, springing from the couch in anger.

"Mother of God!" exclaimed the dwarf, "will the eternal snows melt and the desert blossom? Will the tower fall? Shall I be straight? Will God take pity? Will my lady love?" He threw his jangling punchinello at her feet, and tore his cap from his head. "Wear them," he cried, "my bauble and my cap! I never cracked so excellent a jest."

"Slave!" (the lady grew pale with rage) "to-morrow you shall see, for I shall find which of my courtiers it is that sings thus, and I will marry him, and none but him."

"None but him, gracious lady? And all these perfumed knights that have been praying to you while moons grew great and faded into sheaths again and waned to darkness, and these that hold a courtly contest for your hand?"

"I will marry him alone who knows my soul, and shows it me in song. I sent for you that you might search him out. I thought you might do me some service."

"Aye, for the scorn of fifteen years, which you have given me?"

"Have you not given me back scorn for scorn?"

"At least to-day I have made you forget we are not equals. You are defending yourself against me, mistress, against your slave!"

"Leave me! To-morrow, mind, at night, when my friends are with me, I shall find who sang those songs, and I will be his wife, and none but wife. You think I cannot love? I have known none but fools, though they were not *all* as ugly as devils. Out of my sight. I do not need your aid." The fool, with his head hanging, and his hot eyes rolling, threw up his hands with a frantic gesture and rushed from the room.

The day passed. Evening came, and, later, the moonlight. Under the balcony the shadows were dark. The Lady Lucrece walked in the chamber where the candles stood dark in their silver sconces, and only the moon lit the white marble which her garments swept. She waited long; the voice did not come. The moon reached the west, and still the lady paced the floor. At length the longed for melody, pure, vaulting, triumphant, burst into a song of victory and love; but ere it had sung a score of words it was choked into silence.

A sound arose to the lady's ears of passionate weeping; there was a discordant jangle of the lute as though a disregardful hand had brushed it heavily, and the night wore on in silence.

The next day no one saw the jester, Massimiliani, nor the Lady Lucrece, till it was night—a festal night—and the stately apartments were ablaze with light. Never had Pisa known such a festival. Liberty reigned in hall and hovel, and the Lady Lucrece was the central figure of the festival. She sat at the end of the hall on a dais. Robes of azure silk fell all about her; jewels looped up her hair, glittered on her arms, clasped her white neck, and shone in the fastening of her slippers. About her were flowers, perfume, light, music, men who were courtly, women who were beautiful. There were marbles, carvings, tapestries, statues, and fountains.

But the deep fire in the eyes of the Lady Lucrece did not catch its inspiration from any of these things. It was midnight when she ordered the music to stop. She had been dancing, and all the sensuous rhythm of the motion seemed impersonated in her. She went back to the dais and stood there, young and fair, in the shadow of the ancient carvings. A look of maidenliness, unwonted in her, spread over her face. She came of tyrants, and the blood of the tyrant was in her; but now she looked as gentle as any maid that ever begged her lover for another kiss.

"I have sworn an oath," said she, "and to-night I must keep it. The people of Pisa have long wished me to take a lord, but I have found none whom I desired. But for many nights someone has sung beneath my window. I do not know the man, but my soul is wedded to the voice, and I will marry him alone who can prove to me to-night that it is his." Her hauteur had returned. She was again the daughter of a line of dukes; she was commanding and not seeing. No one replied or moved. The lady spoke again.

"Surely he need not fear; he may trust me." She waited still; a woman's tremours came back to her. "He must have loved me," she cried, "it was the voice of love. Let me but look on him who sang those songs to me." She held out her arms. The jewels on her bosom rose and fell. She seemed half sinking beneath the tremulous agitation. Suddenly from behind the back of that great chair upon the dais there sprang Massimiliani, the hideous jester.

"It was I," he cried. "It was I!"

A murmur, half wrathful and half jeering, a bubble of laughter, surged up from the company.

"Fool!" cried the lady, "this is no time for jests."

"It was I!" he cried. "It was I!"

"Let us hear your voice, knave!" cried a saucy little fellow of sixteen. He flung a coin towards the fool. Massimiliani seized the coin and flung it in the young noble's face. The bent back that had never straightened seemed almost to straighten now, and a voice full of passionate sadness, yet melodious and thrilling, came out of a form which seemed made to be the covering for only unclean things. It was an existent paradox; an astounding incongruity; the antithesis of facts. And as he sang, a hope leapt into his eyes, and a triumph into his voice. Desire belongs not alone to Adonis; even a Caliban may love.

The lady's head was bowed upon her breast. The song he had chosen was the unfinished one she listened to the night before. The humpback bent forward in hideous importunity, but the lady's face was shaded with her silken scarf. He grew mad with a tumult of wild surmises as to what her mood might be. At length she raised her face and he saw. It was the tyrannical disdain of her race—the unspeakable contempt of a ruler for a presumptuous and menial knave—the mad mortification of an outraged woman and the chaste pique of a maiden.

He saw and comprehended at a glance. He knew it was all over. The song died upon his lips. The swords of the nobles, which amazement had kept in their sheaths, were out. Massimiliani leapt forward towards his mistress, caught her in his arms, kissed her, and as the fierce Italians surged up to him he buried his stiletto in his breast.

So died the last jester of Pisa.

Ella Peattie.

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It was no use, try as I might, I could no longer rest quiet in Calcutta, slaving away in that stuffy office of the Indian Bank, of which I was junior partner.

I had been working hard the whole year without a single day's holiday, and, what with the heat and mental exhaustion, my health began to give way.

The questions of what to do, and where to go, were soon answered in a letter which I received a few days afterwards from my old friend Clifford Harrison of the 2nd Bengal Cavalry.

Clifford and I were old school chums, and had been going up for the army together, when the death of my mother upset all my plans. I went out to India to enter my father's bank, and Harrison went into Sandhurst. Since then I had not seen him, but we frequently interchanged letters.

His last note informed me that he had just obtained a captaincy in the 2nd Bengal, which was stationed about fifty miles from Patna, at a place called Gya, and asked me to be sure and go and stay with him at my earliest convenience.

The shooting round Gya is particularly good, and the country abounds in big game. These inducements were not to be despised, so a week later saw me comfortably settled in the train running from Patna (where I changed) to the cantonment of the gallant 2nd.

Clifford met me at my journey's end, and soon we were bowling along in a high double dog-cart behind a smart pair of greys.

During the first week we made some fairly good bags of game. Then it occurred to us that we might get better sport if we went to Cheelapunghi, a beautiful spot in the midst of the jungle, about ten miles from our bungalow. This being decided upon, we got up early the next morning and were soon spinning along in the direction of the Pandu ruins, which lay on our route. Arriving at a thick wall of jungle we called a halt, and, leaving the cart in charge of a native servant, we dived into the mass of trees and bushes behind our native hunter or shikaree, named Gulap Singh.

Gulap was a man of no mean merit in his own way. For that day he acted as tracker and gun-bearer.

We wasted much time in following the spoor of a panther which had led us a futile chase, as also did the tracks of a tiger. It was in vain that Singh protested at our carelessness in not keeping to his leadership, and it was only when darkness was coming on that we found how foolish we had been.

The sun was now setting fast, and, look where we would, nothing but one mass of tangled jungle met our eyes. "Very much tigers here, sahibs," said Singh. "When night come, all creep out."

"That's most comforting," growled Clifford, "but he's right, by jove, this is the Rajah's big game country!"

"Then the sooner we get out of this the better; I for one don't relish being a meal for tigers," said I.

Taking our heavy bore rifles from Gulap, we started back at a smart pace. Crashing our way through the tall undergrowth we came to an open space in the middle of which a pool of water lay. Instinct made us halt, and, on looking at the reeds which grew under the shadow of a huge rock on our right, we saw a tremendous tigress crouching ready to spring at us.

Petrified with fear I staggered back a few paces and halted. Like one paralysed, I could neither think nor do anything. A low ominous growl, however, brought me to my senses, and then I was steady enough.

I saw a playful cub emerge from the thicket and bound to its mother, then remembering that I was the nearest of the three, I raised my rifle and pulled the trigger. The click of the hammer as it descended was the only noise that broke the stillness of the jungle. The gun was not loaded!

To turn and snatch a rifle from Gulap was the work of a moment, then, raising it to my shoulder, I fired. Perhaps it was the hasty aim, perhaps my hand

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trembled—anyhow, when the smoke passed, there was the cub stretched lifeless beside its mother!

With a roar of rage the tigress launched herself at me—move, I could not; I only remember seeing two blazing eyes and hearing Clifford cry:

"Down! For Heaven's sake lie down!"

Possibly I moved a few inches, or my knees gave way; however, I know the long, active body of the brute struck me sideways into the pool, and as the water closed over me I heard the crack of a rifle.

Crawling out of the mud and slime, I saw Harrison standing near the tigress with the still smoking gun in his hand. The huge beast was quivering in her death agonies; with one superb attempt she staggered to her feet, then, bringing out a tremendous roar of rage, she fell on her side, dead.

"That was a fine shot of yours," I exclaimed.

"Confoundedly lucky," he answered; "I was afraid you were done for! What's become of your rifle?"

I thought that perhaps it had been knocked out of my hands when I fell, so, going down to the pool, I began to grope under water for it. I had been fumbling about for some time, when I was brought smartly to the upright by the noise of some weighty beast pounding over the reeds. Rejoining Clifford as quickly as I could, I heard Gulap, whose face was absolutely livid, gasp:

"The tiger come to avenge his mate and cub, sahib!"

"Quick! your rifle, then! Here, take mine!" exclaimed Clifford.

Giving his gun to the tracker, he was about to take his own when a deafening roar shook the ground, and out bounded the tiger within fifty yards of us. This was too much for Gulap, brave though he was; spinning round on his heels he sped down the path with both rifles in his hand, leaving us unarmed!

"Stop, you scoundrel!" cried Clifford. Singh stayed not an instant.

Another roar determined us. Off we dashed, without once looking back. A howl of grief and rage spurred us on. The light was fading, but on we plunged—on and on. How could we hope to escape with that awful swish, crack, swish, as the agile brute followed our track.

Stumbling, tottering, staggering, on we went till, out of sheer fatigue, I nearly fell. An awful roar awoke the echoes of the jungle almost behind our backs, and just as death was upon us we came to a space cleared in a thicket, wherein stood an iron cage about nine feet square.

I remember being dragged inside.

I remember being dragged inside and hearing the door jerked fast, as with almost a scream of rage the tiger hurled himself against the closed gate, biting and clawing at us till the bars themselves rattled and cracked.

The gate was all rusty and thin from age, and might break at any moment. The tiger seemed to read my thoughts, for, trotting back a few yards, he crouched, and with another of his piercing roars he sprang full at the door. Crash! over spun the cage, and, on looking up, we saw the head and shoulders of the brute struggling and clawing to get at us!

Slowly but surely we watched him work his way towards us. Well could we see that huge paw waving nearer and nearer, and the gleaming teeth snapping just above it. Then I fell to wondering if the tiger would kill me or Clifford first, and whether I should get a good sight of his death, then—bang! the great brute came crashing down between us!

I must have fainted, for when I came to, a crowd of officers, with Clifford in their midst, were standing round me. Then it was that I learnt that Singh had fetched the party to rescue us, and had tracked us to the Rajah's shooting cage just in time to kill the tiger before he had forced his way through the gate.

JOHN FRASER.

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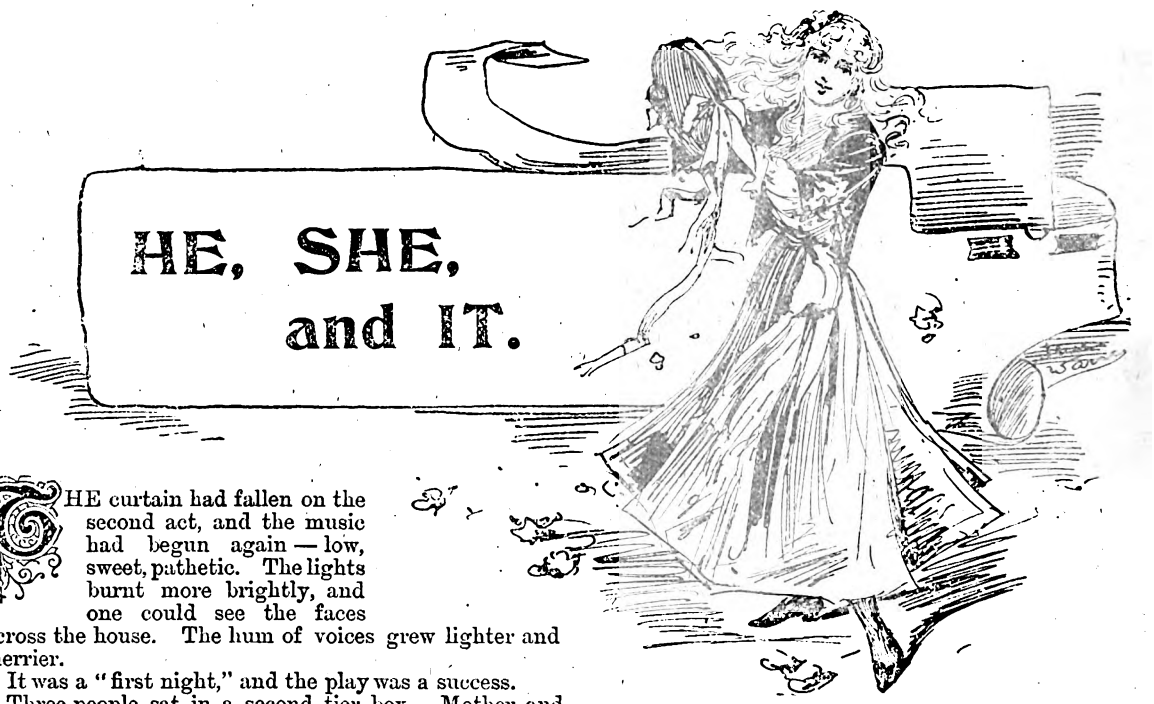
HE, SHE, and IT.



THE curtain had fallen on the second act, and the music had begun again — low, sweet, pathetic. The lights burnt more brightly, and one could see the faces across the house. The hum of voices grew lighter and merrier.

It was a "first night," and the play was a success.

Three people sat in a second tier box. Mother and daughter and daughter's betrothed. The girl was the fair, fragile second self of the handsome lady, who in her own youth must have been a rare beauty. One could guess that the two were tenderly devoted to each other. Every slightest movement or expression of countenance betokened the fullest confidence; the fond smile of the parent, the responsive murmur, of the gentle maiden, the affectionate gesture or whisper one to the other, all spoke of that delightful and cordial understanding between mother and child, which, alas! exists only too rarely. But Lilian Duncan was her mother's only child, and Lilian's tender heart had never been frozen—or even chilled—with coldness from this widow mother.

She was seventeen and her betrothed was thirty-five, more than twice her age. Yet he did not look old or even *blasé* beside her there in the box. His face was smiling and almost innocent in expression (his mouth, to be sure, was hidden beneath a heavy, dark moustache); his eyes were of a placid brown that by lamp or gaslight assumed a melting, indescribable beauty. Apart from these, his chief charm was his voice—low, lingering, persuasive. It was a voice to work its master's will against all obstacles.

As the curtain fell on the second act, he, Herbert Grossmith, leant towards his affianced, and spoke gaily:

"So far so good. I'm glad of it, too, for I know the author. He's a good fellow."

"It is quite strong," said the elder lady softly. "One gets the lesson intended almost from the outset."

"The lesson, mamma," put in Miss Lilian. "What is the lesson? Indeed, I wasn't thinking of anything like lessons; I was only feeling sorry for the poor girl who had been deceived, and——"

"Who is going to be murdered—perhaps in the next act," said Mrs. Duncan. "Isn't that the plot, Herbert? Deceived and murdered?"

But Herbert Grossmith did not at once reply. All in a moment a change had come over him. He was gazing steadfastly across the house at the circle below the opposite corresponding boxes. He appeared so engrossed that Lilian, after regarding him in surprise, reached over and laid her opera-glass upon his knee. As her hand touched his own she started.

"Herbert," she said, "you are not well. Your hand is like ice."

The music ceased, and the tinkle of the bell before the re-rising of the curtain recalled him.

He turned and spoke in an altered tone, and as if he had just drawn a breath of relief.

"I thought I saw someone I used to know. I thought someone I believed dead was over there. It was all imagination."

Then he relapsed into silence, and the play went on. But the words of Lilian's mother, to which he had not replied, were ringing in his ears like the echo of an old, old accusation. "Deceived and murdered!" Had it been all imagination? Or had the dead arisen from the dead? It was gone; the figure that seemed to stand over yonder, and to smile wanly, accusingly up at him seated beside his new love—it had gone! With the ceasing of the music, with the tinkle of the stage-bell, with the going on of the play—it had gone. But would it come again?

He made some faint excuse to his betrothed and her mother, and stole quietly from the box. He went down very softly; and round into the circle where it had walked and sat and wanly smiled. He searched carefully; searched with all his might of gaze and reason. He scrutinised separately each chair—they were all filled. He searched among the people who, not having secured seats, were obliged to stand or promenade. It was not there. He began to feel absolute certainty and relief. It had been all his fancy—an optical illusion Perhaps the play had brought up memories that should

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never rise to darken his life. He breathed more freely; his heart beat normally again; his hands grew warm; he even smiled at his cowardice. But he did not at once return to the box. The act was nearly at an end—a sort of climax was reached. He watched the stage. It was the murder, or the supposed murder scene. The cry of the victim rang out piteously. And soon the curtain had again descended. The lights brightened, and the orchestra played "Under the Daisies."

He looked up at his own box, and a chill more terrible than before shook him from head to foot. It was there, beside Lilian and her mother, yet not seeming to speak with or care for them, seated in the seat that he himself had occupied. It was there, and he was doomed.

He slowly made his way back through the foyer; he knew that he met friends, and that they spoke to him, but he could not reply. He went up into the box. It sat there unknown to Lilian or her mother. They were all unconscious of its presence.

"Why don't you sit down, Herbert?" Lilian asked innocently.

"I am not well," he answered. "I have a chill, I think."

Lilian leant over then as if to place her opera-glass upon the seat he had occupied. He watched her with a kind of horror.

It was there, intangible, yet ever present. He saw it push aside the glass, which fell upon the floor. He stooped quickly, and picked up the repelled object and held it in his hand. He stood more quietly then; the chill upon him did not affect him so unpleasantly as at first. His entire temperature was reduced; the numbness was not wholly disagreeable. As yet it had not turned to face him, but sat gazing down upon the merry throng that filled the house with perfume and laughter and happy babble.

The orchestra soloist was still playing "Under the Daises," when it suddenly turned its countenance upon him. And then he saw the face of a woman, long dead, and the form of the same dead woman, and even the pale, primrose gown she had worn. Her lips moved, but he alone could hear her whisper, "Come!" Her hands beckoned; no other eyes than his might see them. She passed by him through the door of the box, and he could only follow.

He heard Lilian speak his name, "Herbert;" he saw Lilian's mother regarding him wonderingly, and yet he had no word to say. Lilian's fair young face and heavenly eyes faded from his sight—for ever! It was guiding him. The wraith of the woman long dead led him out of the theatre, out into the starry, balmy summer night. It walked beside him now with its shadowy hand upon his arm. They fared rapidly along, street after street, northward out of the city. He did not draw back; he felt no weariness. They left the heart of the city far behind them and came to empty fields at last. In the near distance was a rushing sound of the mighty river hastening seaward.

"At last, at last!" the wraith beside him seemed to whisper. Not vengefully, not in triumph, but rather as with a vast relief. And he found himself answering inaudibly, yet distinctly:

"Well, I am here; at your mercy now."

"As I was at yours," the shadow seemed to sigh. "Do you recall that night? Do you recall——"

He did not hear the rest. A great roaring filled his ears. The scene suddenly altered. The starry summer night was changed to one of fitful moonlight and scurrying clouds—a chilly night in autumn. The place became more lonely. He was back again, back a decade, back in his youth. And in the cold and leaf-strewn roadside lay a woman—dead; a woman in a primrose gown with a mark upon her forehead where an angry hand had struck her down. And he himself was there, fearful, horror-stricken, filled with cowardly hatred—he was there for an instant looking down upon the prostrate form, then turning to flee, fleeing far, far, far away in desperate terror.

Again the scene altered—back to the outskirts of the town and the starry, balmy night. And he went on with It beside him.

"Death is the only expiation; death, death, death!" It seemed to say, as It led him towards the rushing of the mighty river. And he followed obediently. Only once a thought passed through his brain of what now should never be—the thought of Lilian, his fair-haired love. One faint flash of thought brought the sight of her as he had left her, at the side of her mother in the box at the play, the curtain down, the throng of happy people, the light, the perfume, the merry murmur, the music "Under the daisies." That was all. It led him to the steep bank of the river.

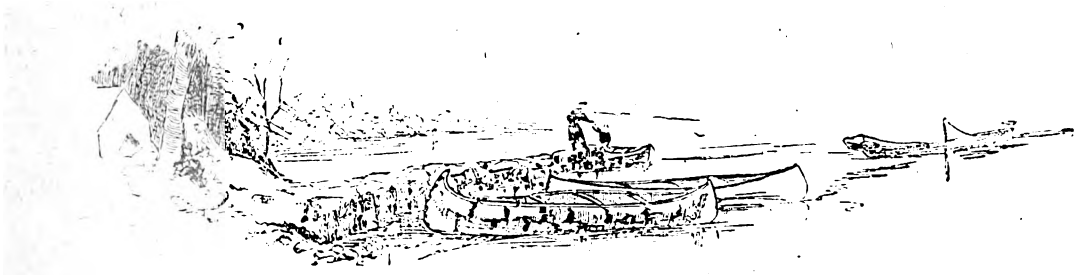
It led him on into the space above the water.

And obediently he followed.

And the mighty waters closed up again, that none should know the story.

And that was the end of what he thought, for when Lilian next spoke to him he lay dead in his chair beside her.

B. S.



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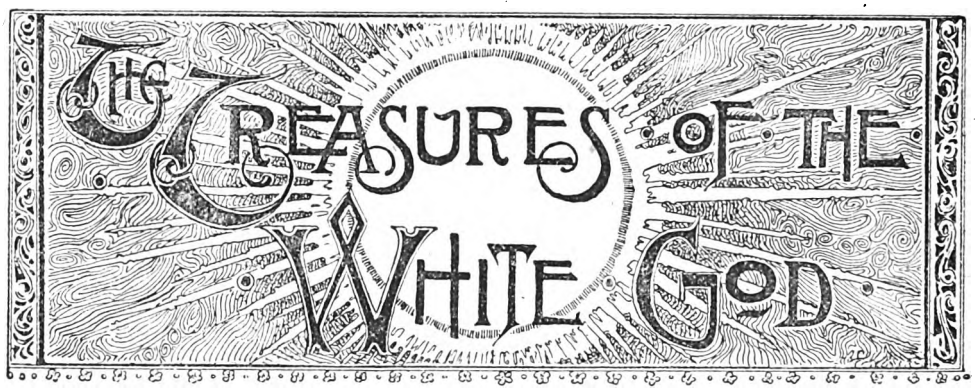

The Story of a Shameful Crime.

CHAPTER XXIII.

In the White Moonlight.

"Your property! your slave!" stammered Burgoyne incoherently, and with alarm. "You forget, señor, I am a citizen of a foreign country. Your laws cannot apply to me. I can appeal to the English of the American government——"

There Adrian Burgoyne paused. In a flash he realised his helplessness. *He* appeal to the laws of a country that had set a price upon him as one of its violaters! How? As Adrian Burgoyne—as convict 407—under a new name? How establish a right to that name—his claim to a false identity? Ah! the past might be dead, but its later issues still lived to confront, defy, complicate.

"We constitute law around these diggings," announced the Mexican. "March him to the mine, place him in charge of the overseer," he concluded to his friend.

"As you say, Fuertado. Come, señor, we are too strong for you. We are short-handed at the mine, too. Ten dollars will soon be worked out."

"Ten dollars!" repeated Burgoyne bitterly. "You value your accommodations highly."

"Only one for that," smiled Fuertado, with a covert sneer; "the other nine dollars cover the saving of your life."

There was no help for it. The men had him in a close trap, and to struggle, to defy, to debate, was useless. They were armed. They had half-a-dozen slaves at their command to pursue him if he fled.

A month—thirty days of servitude, solitude, delay! The work he did not mind, the close cynosure of a brutal overseer he was used to, but the delay! Why, in a month!—Colonel Lytle had promised Richard Sheldon to complete his Mexican mission, and place the secreted Ringold fortune in his hands before that term of time had elapsed.

"I will feign to become a willing worker, will throw the overseer off his guard by seeming submission, and in a day or two make a dash for liberty," planned Burgoyne hopefully.

More easily said than done, however, was this, for he was set to work in an excavation far under the surface, and it had but one exit, and that continually guarded by the overseer.

At night he and the half-breeds were marched to a log shed, with barred doors and grated windows, and outside, all the night through, a burly favourite of Fuertado worked for eventual liberty, by watching to nip out any plan for escape with a bullet from the revolver he carried.

Thus two days passed by. On the evening of the third, just as Burgoyne was beginning to despair of escape, and was divided between open defiance of his tyrant masters and a philosophical submission to their will for the prescribed month, something occurred that aroused him with a rude shock from his apathetic dejection and uncertainty, and started every nerve in his frame vibrating to all the old-time vigour and intrepidity.

He lay that night in his hard board bunk, unable to sleep, and revolving plan after plan in his active mind for escape. His companions, done out with their hard labours of the day, were snoring loudly. So near was Burgoyne to the log wall of the shed that he could glance out through an interstice where the clay filling had dried and fallen away, and could make out the armed sentinel pacing up and down on his solitary beat.

Dreamily, mechanically, observing the moonlit expanse through his little port-hole of observation, he started into deeper interest as two forms advanced from the direction of Fuertado's hut.

One of them he instantly recognised as its proprietor. He held an open letter in his hand, as if his companion had just brought it, and its reading had paved the way for a stroll and the seeking of a secluded spot where they could discuss its merits, free from the prying attention of the overseer and the other regular denizens of the place.

"Here, señor, be seated. We will be free from all eavesdroppers here," spoke the Mexican, in his blandest tones, and halting just within the peering Burgoyne's range of vision, and indicating a long wooden box set on edge.

"Mercy—it is he—Lytle!"

Adrian Burgoyne sprang up in his bunk, and glued his eyes to the interstice between the logs, and lingered there, rapt, amazed, discrediting the evidence of his visual senses.

It could be no delusion. Fuertado's companion was his old-time enemy, the same sinister-faced, suave scoundrel as of yore. There was no change in his appearance beyond the ordinary, save that he had affected a border swagger, and wore the conventional sombrero of the country he was in.

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"Well, Mr. Fuertado," said Lytle, "how does the letter strike you?"

Every word he spoke was distinctly audible to the eager and engrossed listener, shielded from view not ten feet distant by only the thickness of a log wall.

"Excellently, señor—most excellently!" chirped the polite Fuertado. "My friend Mendonca knows me as a trusted neighbour. His will is law. He bids me extend all aid possible to you. You have but to command!"

"That is for money, of course?" laughed Lytle bluntly. "See here, Fuertado! I am a plain, outspoken Yankee."

"Admirable nation! I welcome you, señor," commended the Mexican, with overwhelming courtesy.

"Very good. I am here on a mission."

"So Mendonca states."

"As agent and representative of the great World's Fair at Chicago."

"We have heard of it, señor."

"I come with influential introductions to State and clergy, with an abundance of means, and with a coterie of servants, or, rather guards. My point of interest in and about Guayli is the cave of Bureldo."

"Ah! the Aztec house of mysteries?"

"Exactly. I wish to inspect its numberless curiosities I wish to purchase what curios I can. Failing in that, I am anxious to photograph its treasures, to make up a collection for the Mexican exhibit in the great Columbian Exposition."

"A truly philanthropic and public-spirited motive," commented the fulsome Mexican.

"Very good. I arrive three days since. The government officer at Guayli treats me handsomely. He helps me on the first step of my way, by insuring a warm welcome from the priests at the San Miguel monastery. They hear my story. I am taken to the Aztec priest in charge of the cave of Bureldo. He is very friendly; with all the idiotic, clinging superstitions of dead ages, he is still very keen and clever. He offers me a lot of common, worthless curiosities, but when I offer to pay an immense, an exorbitant price for some of his stone idols, noticeably the celebrated White God, old Medeiras, as he calls himself, lifts his hands in holy horror, and cries out, 'Sacrilege!'"

"They are very tenacious of their past traditions and mementoes, these Aztec desendants," vouchsafed Fuertado.

"However," resumed Lytle, "he had no particular objection to my photographing with my camera some of their deities. He will allow myself and what assistants I require to enter the sacred cave. The day after to-morrow is the time apportioned for this visit."

"Ah! then your object is gained?" murmured the Mexican carelessly, but watching his guest with a furtive, insinuating glance.

"Yes and no," responded Lytle vaguely.

"Yes and no! Rather ambiguous, señor, is it not?"

"Yes, because I gain admittance to the cave. No, because I imagine Medeiras will only allow me to see a few of his rarities. These fellows are very conservative and tricky. Now, then, I want free access to all the curiosities of the cave."

"Señor," interrupted Fuertado, with a covert, crafty grin, "be the blunt Yankee you profess! Truth to tell, you desire an opportunity to secrete a few of those self-same curios, unnoticed, eh?"

"Well, perhaps," winked Lytle. "At any rate, I met your friend, Mendonca. I explained to him what I wanted. He is unable to assist me, but he directed me to you. Now, then, Mr. Fuertado, I will pay you a liberal amount to come under my directions for just two hours the day after to-morrow."

The eyes of the Mexican sparkled with active, crafty cupidity.

"How much, señor?" he demanded eagerly.

"A thousand dollars, current coin, cash down."

"You are generous!" spoke Fuertado, his face one great glow of expectation and avarice.

"Then I can count upon you?"

"It is a bargain! As I said before, Mendonca is my trusted friend. He sends you to me. Command me; I am yours."

"Very well; you will come to the San Miguel Monastery to see me the day after to-morrow morning. You will come prepared to act."

"In what way, señor?"

"At noon, accompanied only by the Aztec high priest——"

"Medeiras?"

"Yes, myself and my *photographing* party"—and Lytle gave a significant and emphatic sneering intonation to the word—"will enter the cave of Bureldo. Our explorations will consume, say, three hours. At present only a few women, whom we do not fear, guard the entrance to the cave in a perfunctory sort of a way."

"Where are the men?" asked Fuertado.

"Gone, most of them, luckily for my plans, to a religious celebration across the mountains."

"I understand!"

"About a score are at home. It is these I want you to keep out of the way, from noon until dusk, the day after to-morrow."

"Ah! and you care not how?"

"Not I."

"A little drugged pulque will settle their cases. You can rely on me, señor. They shall be inactive, helpless, at the time you name, and I shall never be suspected of having a hand in it."

"I can rely on you?"

"Implicitly."

"Then I shall place in Mendonca's hands, to-night the one thousand dollars, to be paid when your task is faithfully executed."

"To-night? Can you not remain and partake of my hospitality until the morning?"

"No, thanks. My plans require my presence at San Miguel."

The two men moved away, Fuertado accompaning Lytle as far as a little thicket near by, where his horse was tethered.

The wondering and excited Burgoyne saw his old-time enemy mount a mustang and disappear along the narrow mountain path. Then Fuertado returned, slowly and thoughtfully.

He paused near the shed again, and whistled.

The man on guard came instantly to his side.

"You signalled me, señor?" he questioned servilely.

"Yes. Go to the hacienda and send Pedro here. Then keep out of earshot until we complete our confab."

A few moments later, the man who had assisted Fuertado in rescuing Burgoyne from the quicksand appeared, and he sat down by the side of the Mexican on the self-same box where he had held the colloquy with Colonel Lytle.

Evidently a partner, a friend of Fuertado, the latter proceeded at once to make a confidant and accomplice of him. He detailed the episode of the letter, and repeated his recent conversation with Lytle, word for word.

"Well, Pedro," he queried at its conclusion, "what do you think of it?"

"I think—a thousand dollars!" laughed the other.

"Yes, but what is the Yankee up to?"

"What matters it, so that we get our pay?" asked Pedro.

"I wish I knew!" persisted Fuertado.

"I can surmise."

"Indeed?"

"Yes."

"Out with it, then!"

"He is after some valuable relic or curio in the wave."

"Very probably," admitted the Mexican.

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"He will take forcible possession of it, overpowering Medeiras."

"And then?"

"Fly with it. In doing so, he will have to pass the guards at the entrance to the cave."

"But they are only a lot of old women at the present time?"

"He counts on that. They cannot deter him, resist, or fight. He fears only the men. If you have them under control, drugged and helpless, he will be able to escape."

"I imagine you are correct, Pedro," announced Fuertado speculatively. "As you say, what matters it to us how many of those hideous old stone idols he steals. Only—"

"Eh? you have a thought?"

"A bright one."

"Then it means?"

"Two thousand dollars, instead of one."

"Speak!" urged the Mexican's companion.

"I know a secret exit from the cave."

"You do?"

"Yes; with a knowledge of that, the Yankee can escape at his leisure, and without being observed. Would he not pay another thousand for the information, think you?"

"Fuertado, you are a genius! Tell me! Where is this secret outlet?"

In detail the Mexican awarded the required explanation. In detail, point for point, the eager listening Adrian Burgoyne memorised the valuable information.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, as the two men moved away towards the hut, "I know all—a secret way to the cave, all the plans of Lytle; another day and I shall be too late. It must not be. I must escape, and to-night, at all hazards!"

He glanced through his loop-hole of observation once more.

Perfect silence and serenity held the scene. One human barrier to liberty alone was in view—the solitary sentinel, pacing his confined beat in the white moonlight.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The White God.

He must escape!—but how?

So often during his brief confinement had Adrian Burgoyne mentally discussed every feasible plan looking to liberty, that it seemed like going over a well-worn road to cast up the chances of this and that scheme.

He waited patiently for an hour. The lights of the hut had been put out. Its denizens were probably asleep. The sentinel, smoking a cigarette, was swinging indolently in a hammock strung between two trees; but as he slept all day, Burgoyne knew that he would maintain a surveillance over the shed all night long.

It would be impossible to break out of the shed without attracting the guard's attention. The door was stoutly barred on the outside; the window was grated with broad bands of hoop iron, sunk and looped into the woodwork at the sides. Burgoyne had about abandoned all hopes for a dash for liberty until morning, when fortune, a trivial circumstance, favoured his plans immensely.

One of the sleepers moved uneasily; then he began to groan. Then he woke up, uttered a howl of pain, and this instantly grew into cries of horror and alarm.

The disturbing sounds aroused the sentinel. He came up to the door of the shed.

"What is that?" he demanded sharply.

"Manuel!" groaned the unhappy sufferer. "I am ill, dying. I drank of the surface water in the digging to allay my thirst. It has given me the fever."

The fever! The guard knew what that meant. He realised, too, its deadly contact. An expert in such things, he insisted on an immediate examination of the patient, quarantine, isolation, if he, indeed, betrayed active symptoms of a disease that attacks at morn, and leaves its victim stark and stiff at high noon.

"Wait!" he spoke. "I will come in and see you. I will light the lantern. Do not disturb the others. It will cause a panic. It may be only a passing pang of pain."

This, just beyond the door, and the bar rattled.

Adrian Burgoyne glided across the dark structure. He got just at the side of the door, and crouched back into the shadow and shelter of the thick post, forming a part of its massive frame-work.

The door opened, and the sentinel, after listening for a moment, strode across the room. The snoring of the sleepers reassured him.

"I will soon have a light," he said.

Swift as an eagle, Adrian Burgoyne made a forward swoop. He was across the rude threshold in a flash.

Slam!—he drew the oaken portal shut. Crash—the bar shot into the grooves, closing in the keeper of prisoners, a prisoner himself.

Then he sped for the near timber, unheeding the cries of the sentinel, his shrill signal whistle of alarm for the overseer and the other denizens of the hut, calculating only to keep out of range of the barred window, through which a shot might stop his flight.

If there was pursuit, it never neared his trail. Straight as an arrow he set his course for the cave of Bureldo. He minded not weariness or exhaustion. He had a mission to perform, and a speedy one.

Time was the essence of his plans. Within forty-eight hours Colonel Lytle would possess the White God and its precious contents, unless he anticipated him.

At bare daylight Adrian Burgoyne crawled into a dense copse, and flung himself upon the ground, too wearied to keep his eyes open. Thorns had penetrated his insufficient foot-covering, the brambles, the sharp-pointed rocks, had rent his attire in pieces. He had lost his hat in a fall dangerously near to the edge of an enormous pit, but—he had arrived!

Within a few hundred yards he made out a peculiar rock formation, which Fuertado had described as the position of the secret entrance to the cave. It was only a matter of rest, recuperation; then he would essay an expedition into the bowels of the mountain.

It was several hours later when Burgoyne awoke. He was not afraid of intruders in that desolate spot. A few nuts and berries served for a meal. Then he traversed the base of the mountain, in search of the aperture that led into the cave.

"This must be it," murmured the searcher, as he pulled aside a dense growth of vines, revealing a yawning gap in the rocks beneath.

The flare of a match within the darksome void that Burgoyne now penetrated, revealed the fact that at some remote time the subterranean gallery had been employed as an exit from the cave. As if to verify the conjecture, secured around a stone was a hempen cord, apparently a guide-string, and, seizing it, Burgoyne groped his way forward.

It was damp and rotten, and had certainly been unused for some time, but he followed its course. But for it he would have been at loss how to proceed, for, further on, the gallery he was traversing diverged into numerous smaller avenues.

His last match was employed for a survey around, as, with a jarring fall, he stumbled down a steep slant in the path, the cord breaking in his grasp. The situation now alarmed him. He groped confusedly about to regain and reunite the severed strands, but could indentify neither. Bewildered by the dense darkness, he wandered aimlessly about. At last he selected a path leading straight ahead, and somewhat concernedly realising that the most difficult portion of his task would be to find his way again out of the perplexing labyrinth he had so rashly penetrated.

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"I must rest. It seems endless groping — unvarying darkness!" murmured the wearied wanderer at last.

He sat braced against a rock, and dozing when a sudden commotion, faint but reverberating, aroused him.

Human voices and the sound of some sweet-stringed instruments were mingled in a chanting, sing-song rhythm. Then a dim glow shifted across the walls of rock about him.

Looking straight ahead, at the end of the gallery he was in, Adrian Burgoyne made out moving forms. The light grew stronger. Human beings, arrayed in priestly garb and bearing torches, were visible in an immense, cave-like apartment, marching about, and bowing and chanting to numberless idols set upon pedestals of wood and stone.

Adrian Burgoyne drew a long, deep breath of interest and satisfaction. He had penetrated to the cave of the Aztec—he had reached his goal, the self-same solitude where his dead friend, Ralph Ringold, had lurked a hunted fugitive, seven years ago, and where he had stowed away his treasure!

The voices died away, the stringed instruments were silenced, the glare of light grew dim.

Creeping to the remote end of the gallery, Burgoyne gazed after the retreating procession.

A single glow now permeated the subterranean apartment. As he strained his vision he made out that it proceeded from an ancient silver lamp. Within it lay oil and a wick, and this latter sputtered fitfully.

He made his way towards it. Then he glanced up at the idol in whose honour, it seemed, it was kept burning.

Awe, wonder, checked his pulses as he looked; a vague mysterious emotion enchained his senses as he realised that he viewed the blank, patient face of a Deity older than Montezuma—a veritable heir of the ages, the mute, dumb witness of all the splendour, terror and mystery of the rich courts of the ancient Aztecs!

The old and the new joined hands across the abyss of the centuries. His long quest was ended—his mission all but accomplished.

For Adrian Burgoyne knew that the dazzling white form that looked down upon him was none other than the oldest idol in the world—the famous White God!

CHAPTER XXV.

A MIGHTY COST.

BIRDS of a feather, utterly soulless, crafty and cruel the Mexican, Fuertado, and Colonel Lytle had little difficulty in coming to a distinct and harmonious understanding.

The day succeeding that upon which Adrian Burgoyne made his escape from peon servitude, the plots of Richard Sheldon's emissary were ripe for execution.

At noon, as he had previously arranged, accompanied by four ruffianly-looking cohorts, whose services he had secured upon arriving in Mexico, Lytle appeared at the entrance to the cave of Bureldo, and, at the same hour, the villainous Fuertado was industriously engaged in administering drugged pulque to the few able-bodied men left in the Aztec camp.

Medeiras, the priest, met Lytle at the cave. He was a young man, but his early training, his earnest appreciation of the king-like attributes of priesthood, had left a deep impress on his classic face. All truth, sincerity and seriousness, his deep devotion to a dead religion was a commendable example to many more highly educated in a more meritorious cause. To him, the fading glories of an almost extinct race held a glamour that idealised the cave of Bureldo into a storehouse of antiquity and tradition more precious than a regal palace of rare magnificence.

Arrayed in his priestly robes, and alone, he ushered his visitors into the cave.

Torches had been set about to illuminate the dark interior. He exhibited many strange and curious relics; he even pressed several upon Lytle as a gift, but, with ill-concealed eagerness, the schemer insisted on seeing and photographing the idols.

Had Medeiras been more experienced in the progress of science, he would have known that the manœuvres of Lytle were a weak feint. It was impossible to take photographs without the aid of a flash-light in the cave, but Lytle went through all the movements with his camera. His sinister eye glittered covetously as he finally came to the White God.

Affairs had reached a climax. The receptacle of a princely fortune, to secure which he had travelled thousands of miles, was before him.

He made a significant movement to his assistants. They feigned an awe at the presence of the famous idol that gratified the high priest. Then Lytle said:

"The famous White God?"

"Yes," replied Medeiras—"our mightiest and holiest possession. Few, except priestly devotees, are allowed to view it, but the monks at San Miguel recommend you as a friend."

"I must photograph it," spoke Lytle.

Medeiras bowed.

"There is scarcely light enough, however. Would you secure another torch?"

The priest murmured an accommodating assent. He started back the way they had come, alone.

"To work!" ordered Lytle promptly, to his companions.

He knew that Medeiras would be out of view of the idol for some moments, the nearest torch being several hundred yards distant.

Immediately the four men who had accompanied Lytle reached under their coats and produced as many bags.

The White God was a squat figure, perhaps three feet high, and weighing some two hundred pounds.

It was formed of some white, shining substance, resembling gypsum, and stood upon a pedestal of blue marble.

In a twinkling the men tore it from its stand. One bag enveloped it, the other three were strapped about it, and a rope was whipped across the bulky parcel, so that it could be readily carried away.

At just the moment when they had completed their nefarious work the priest, Medeiras, reappeared, bearing the torch in his hand.

The flaring stick went nervelessly from his grasp as he viewed the pedestal, bereft of its accustomed deity.

"Sacrilege!" he fairly screamed. "The White God!"

A terrible look in his calm, flashing eyes, he raised a whistle to his lips that would have sounded a speedy alarm to his friends at the entrance to the cave.

Ere he could give utterance to the warning, however, Lytle raised a small leaden stick he had quickly taken from his pocket.

A cruel blow fell across the dusky, classic brow of the fanatic priest. He went down like a shot, bleeding, prone and senseless, lay inert at the base of the pedestal that had been ravished of its sacred guardian.

"Now, to leave the cave. Quick!" ordered Lytle to his accomplices. "Get away from the camp to the horses. Remember, two hundred dollars to each one of you if I reach the Valdis range by nightfall, with the idol, safe!"

The men took up the idol by the ropes and sped towards the entrance to the cave.

Lytle leading, they came out into the light of day again.

A score or more of women and children gathered there, stared vaguely at them—suspiciously at the bulky object the men bore wrapped up in the sacks.

"Go straight ahead," directed Lytle, in an undertone. "I will attend to these old hags, if they make any disturbance."

His cruel, calculating eye viewed an approaching woman

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grimly as she advanced, and his hand stole to his coat pocket and clasped a revolver there.

"Medeiras?" spoke the woman sententiously.

"Oh! your priest?" returned Lytle, with affected carelessness.

"Yes; he has not returned."

"Oh! he, he——"

A glib lie was ready on the schemer's lips. Its utterance was checked, however, for at that moment, from the recesses of the cave there echoed a shrill, piercing whistle.

Instantly every member of the Aztec group sprang from the ground. With lowering, excited faces they advanced towards Lytle.

"Confusion!" breathed the latter. "He has recovered—the signal of warning!"

"Medeiras! Treachery! Sacrilege!" shouted a dozen voices.

"Stand back!" ordered Lytle.

The women seized cudgels and other missiles. A fierce hail of stones assailed the retreating Lytle.

"I've got to do it," he hissed grimly. "Luckily I brought it with me."

Crash!

He drew a tin spherical object from his pocket suddenly. He gave it a forward fling, and then, nimbly putting a great rock between himself and his pursuers, started to overtake his emissaries.

A blinding glare, a paralysing shock, an explosion that echoed and re-echoed through the far hills like a peal of thunder, made all Nature recoil and shudder.

Frantic, fearful cries of agony rent the scene, next. One glance only the ruthless assassin cast upon the writhing, mutilated masses of humanity into the midst of which he had cast the explosive.

Then, all unmindful of the wreck and ruin he had wrought, he hurried on to his companions.

They rounded the mountain and came to their horses. The idol was secured to a mule, the cavalcade pushed forward.

"Ten miles," soliloquised the triumphant plotter; "the train—the border—then home—a royal fortune!"

Whiz—thud!

An ominous sound made the horses start, and caused the men to glance about and above them in sudden alarm.

"What was that?" demanded Lytle sharply.

"An arrow!"

The man who replied pointed to a tree. An arrow, shot from some hidden covert, still quivered where it had struck.

As he pointed, a second weapon grazed the speaker's head and drew blood.

"Look!" cried another member of the party.

Gazing aloft along the side of the mountain, for a moment Colonel Lytle stood transfixed.

They had been rounding the hill in which was situated the Aztec cave.

From a ledge of this eminence, some forty yards above them, the arrows had been directed.

They evidently constituted the sole armament of the attacking party, for, glancing thither, Lytle caught sight of a man holding a bow in his hand, and waving it menacingly at them, in lieu of further weapons of attack.

"Medeiras!" muttered Lytle, with a malignant scowl. "He may make us trouble yet."

No; a moment sufficed to indicate that the high priest of the cave abandoned all hopes of preventing the theft of the White God and the escape of its despoilers.

The blood from Lytle's blow still drenching his face, he glared down upon his enemy with eyes the schemer would never forget—so accusing, so fierce, so resentful was their gleam.

"Hark you!" he cried, and his voice rang out clear as a clarion note on that still afternoon air. "You plotter, thief, and assassin, you have bereft us of our most revered deity; you have stricken our women and children in cowardly murder; you have fled unscathed, but the end is not yet!"

"Fire—shoot down the prating infidel," cried Lytle angrily, with all the zeal of a religious enthusiast—but of an enthusiast whose god is gold.

A fusilade of bullets tattooed upon the rocks about the priest, Medeiras, but, by drawing back into some secret passage-way by which he had reached the mountain-side from the cave, Medeiras evaded the deadly leaden hail.

"Drive on!" ordered Lytle. "Hasten—we have no time to spare!"

The cavalcade started forward again, but, ere they rounded the rocks that led to the valley below, from the mountain side rang forth a second anathema.

"Go upon your blood-red course!" came the stern, thrilling message. "You thief, murderer, sacrilegious monster! Go back to the proud, disdainful people who laugh at us, who will call your base theft clever, because we are down-trodden, and poor, and obscure! But, mark you! though your countrymen entrench you behind ramparts of steel, though you hide in the uttermost parts of the earth, the avenger of the White God shall seek you out, shall find you, shall drink your heart's blood, drop for drop. By the spirit of Montezuma, I swear it; Lytle—I know your name! It is written in hateful characters of murderous scarlet across my heart. Lytle!—tremble! beware! for the destiny that marks you as a victim to the avenger of blood shall never waver or falter in its purpose until your base, cowardly life has paid the forfeit of vengeance to the devotees of the White God!"

"Oh, I say, this boaster's ranting is monotonous!" cried Lytle, but with a slight shudder at the ringing echo of the ominous threat.

One week later, with a sigh of infinite relief, Colonel Lytle paid off his unscrupulous emissaries on the banks of the Rio Grande.

The next day, with the White God safe in a hermetically sealed iron box, he took his seat in a Pullman, to follow it, and tranquilly puffed away at his cigar, with the satisfaction and contentment of a noble warrior returning from a victorious battlefield.

A brief telegram had preceded him.

It was directed to Richard Sheldon, and it read:

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(To be continued.)

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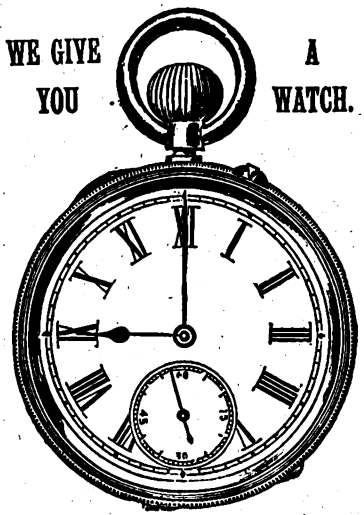

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EDITED BY ARTHUR PEARSON OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY

SHORT STORIES

No. 372.] For the Week ending February 15th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

THE SLUMBER OF TRELAWNEY.

THERE were certain things in our family which afforded subject for gossip; and this died out, revived, and died out again, according to circumstances. We had wealth—few were richer than the Trelawneys. All admitted that we were just, and even generous in our dealings with others; but we had no intimate friends, and kept apart from our neighbours. We neither made visits nor received visitors. No invited guest ever crossed our threshold, and those who came on business were courteously bowed out when their business was concluded. A meal in the kitchen, and sometimes a trifle of money, was given to a mendicant; but, the meal eaten, and the money taken, the recipient was unceremoniously turned out.

Our servants had been with us from their childhood; they served us well and faithfully, they received good wages, their duties were light, they had kind treatment, their children were born and reared on the place; when superannuated, their wages went on till they died; but they formed no attachment to us, nor we to them. We used our fortune liberally for public purposes, but grew richer every year, for we never lived up to half our income, and with every generation the Trelawney property increased in extent, while it shared the general appreciation of value.

The Trelawneys were long-lived; few died young. But there were few of them born. For six generations, with one exception, but one child followed each marriage, and that was always a son. The exception was with my great-great-grandfather, who had a brother two years younger than himself, named John. The latter's birth was down in the family record as occurring in 1772, but what struck me as singular was the absence of any mention of the year of his death. He seemed to have disappeared and died, probably, in some place and at some time unknown.

For some reason or other a large amount of personal property, supposed to have been his, was held in trust by my great-grandfather, and that trust had been renewed regularly from father to son. I once asked my father about this missing great-granduncle. A deeper gloom than usual overcast his face at my question. "You will know all about it some day," was his reply, and then he went on to speak of something else.

Certainly both my father and grandfather wore a troubled and gloomy look upon their faces. They were a prey to settled melancholy. I never saw them smile. Everyone noted their careworn expression; but none knew why.

There was a mystery. Next to the library, in the northern wing, was a large chamber, as laid down in the architect's plan of a century before. Its shutters were always kept closed and a light was seen there all night long. In the rest of the house gas had been introduced from a small generator on the premises. This solitary lamp was filled and trimmed by my father or grandfather, oil being kept in the library for the purpose. No one but they was allowed to enter the chamber, which was kept locked, and each carried a key.

And three times a day, no matter whether they had breakfasted, dined, or supped, or not, there was a slight refection, not enough for more than one, brought to the library. It was either milk or bouillon—something liquid. They partook of it in secret, the library door being locked until the repast ended. And another remarkable fact was observed: my father and grandfather never went out of the house together. If one went out, the other remained at home, as though to guard the secret of the chamber.

Concerning this mystery there was much discussion among the servants. It was a theme of never-ending interest; but, as either boy or man, when I happened among them it was not touched, and I only inferred their talk by the fact that when I appeared the conversation was hushed. It was more talked about after my mother's death. The idea somehow got abroad that the chamber was a storehouse of treasure. This led to the visit of burglars. But my grandfather, who always slept in the library, having a cabinet bedstead there, shot one of the burglars, and the other escaped. After that there were no more attempts of the kind.

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So I grew up, often wondering about, but never knowing, the secrets of the closed room. Unlike the rest, I went about a great deal, and, after coming down from Oxford, travelled in this country and on the Continent, in which mode of amusing myself I was encouraged. I had an ample allowance of money, owned several good horses, kept a yacht, and indulged in many other extravagances until I exhausted the resources of mild dissipation. Suddenly my grandfather died, and I was called home.

I found my father looking more gloomy than ever. Between him and my grandfather there had always existed an intimacy more like that of brothers than that between father and son. He asked me into the library as soon as I came, locked the door, and bade me be seated. Then he said:

"Your grandfather's death makes it necessary to impart to you a ghastly secret, which, as a precaution, should be kept by two. You have looked over our family record?" I nodded. "You remember, then, there is no account of the death of your great-grand-uncle John, who mysteriously disappeared eighty years ago. The reason is that he never died at all. He still lives, if his condition may be considered life."

He arose and, taking a key from his pocket, opened the door of the great room and entered, bidding me follow. The chamber was long and lofty. The floor, which had once been waxed and polished, had evidently been neglected, and bore on it neither carpet nor rug. There were half-a-dozen heavy, old-fashioned chairs, and an old-fashioned table ornamented with marquetry, and a heavily-curtained bedstead. My father threw aside the bed-curtains and pointed to a form upon the bed.

At first I thought it was the wax figure of a very old man, but a second glance showed me that it breathed. The eyes were closed; the face wrinkled and pallid. It seemed less like one asleep than as a man whose animation was nearly suspended. The features, in spite of the deep wrinkles, and the fact that the lower part of the face was hidden by a long white beard, were those of the Trelawneys, all of whom had marked and peculiar faces. I suppose that I looked inquiry, for my father replied to my thoughts, though I said nothing.

"This has been the secret curse of the family for eighty years, and will continue until that poor old frame wears out. Come back to the library, and I will tell you all."

With the evidence before me, and the fact that it was told by my father, whose truthfulness no one could doubt, I was forced to credit the story. Thus it was:

Guy and John had been very much attached to each other; and when Guy married, John still remained in the house. They were co-heirs, but that mattered little—they practically held but one purse. The fatality attending the family came. My great-grandmother died, leaving my grandfather, a boy of two years. My great-grandfather did not marry again, though time soon softened his grief. One day, when he had begun to receive company, his guest was a French gentleman, a M. Delille.

After dinner, the guest happened to mention that he was a pupil of M. Mesmer, and was well versed in his system. Some good-natured scepticism being evinced as to the power of producing hypnotic sleep, he offered to experiment on his host, and did so successfully. Then he proposed to try it on John, who assented. He was equally successful there. He put a number of questions to John while in the mesmeric state, which were answered, to his brother's great delight.

The windows were open as the day was warm. They were what was called at the time French windows, opening to the floor, on a narrow balcony with a low railing. One of the answers seemed so comical that the Frenchman fell into a fit of laughter, so violent that he lost his balance, and fell backwards out of the window and over the balcony to the ground—the chamber being on the second storey. My great-grandfather ran to assist him, but he was past assistance. The man had broken his neck.

A doctor was immediately summoned, but his examination only confirmed the terrible truth. When that was over the elder brother, Guy, went in to John, who, in the excitement of the moment, had been forgotten. He found him still in the mesmeric stupor, and tried to awaken him. Failing in this, he called up the family physician, to whom he detailed the circumstances. Every effort was in vain. The doctor insisted that it was a cataleptic fit; he pooh-poohed at Mesmer and his devices. But whatever it was, John could not be aroused, and was put to bed.

Thus he had remained through these long years. To avoid scandal, the secret had been kept in the family. His food, which was given him by a stomach-tube, was of a liquid character, and had served to maintain life. His brother had attended him, performing the most servile of offices faithfully and well. When his son was near manhood, he had let him into the secret. When the latter married, the wife, in time, was made acquainted with it. Thus it had gone from father to son, and on down, the Trelawneys being chained to aiving corpse.

Of course, I accepted a share in the responsibility of the secret. What else could I do? But I never married, though often urged by my father. I would wait, I said, until all was over.

John Trelawney was now over a hundred and eight years old. He could not last much longer. When I asked my father why no attempt had been made to awaken the mesmerised man, he replied that the secret of doing that had died with Delille. This stimulated me. I eagerly read and studied all about the subject, and when it came my turn to wait on the old man, I made a number of experimental reverse passes, but always in vain.

Two years after this, my father exhibited marked symptoms of an incurable disease, with which he lingered for two more years, when he died.

The secret had now become my sole burden. John Trelawney, if we could give the corpse a living name, had been reduced almost to a skeleton, withered, and dried up, but still alive. I had given up all hopes of resuscitating him; but he exercised over me a grim fascination. I used to remain after I had fed him with the stomach-tube, and sit and read an hour or so, with a bottle of wine before me, though I only sipped a single glass. One day I had taken a solitary pamphlet—a German magazine, rather—and on glancing over its pages I noticed a paper on "Hypnotism." The only thing in it which excited me was a statement of the author that there was no difficulty in arousing one from the artificial sleep provided the reverse passes were continued without intermission, and the operator had faith in his own powers *and an unconquerable will.*

"I know," I said, "that I have all the will-power in which the Trelawneys have been deficient, and I will control this man. He shall awaken."

I began making the reverse passes over the prostrate form, and continued them without intermission until my arms arched. But I kept on. "You shall awaken." I said, and I meant it.

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Suddenly the figure beneath me uttered a deep sigh.

How my heart throbbed! I continued the passes.

John Trelawney opened his eyes, looked round, half-closed his eyes, and fell back. I ran to the table, filled a glass of wine, and poured it between his lips. To my intense delight, he swallowed it, though apparently with difficulty. It seemed to invigorate him. He half raised himself, while I supported him, and looking in my face, said, in a thin, piping voice:

"Where am I? Who are you?"

"I am Guy Trelawney," I replied.

"Guy Trelawney! Nonsense! You are not my brother. Ah!" he continued, looking round, and then at me. "I see it now. This is a dream."

With that he closed his eyes.

I put him gently down, and procured another glass of wine. "Take this, Uncle John," I said; "it will do you good."

"He calls me Uncle John," he muttered. "Just now he wanted to pass for my brother. What a queer dream! Wine, eh! Well, it does seem natural in taste."

He drank the wine, and I supported him in a sitting posture by piling the pillows, reinforced by a chair at his back. Then, as it was growing dark, I drew a match from the box, and, after igniting it, lit the lamp.

"What on earth is that?" he cried. "Did you get the light by rubbing the ends of your fingers? This is certainly the oddest dream that ever entered a man's noddle."

I told him it was a friction match, and lit another to show how the light was produced. He was very much amused, and listened with a sardonic smile while I explained the mode of manufacture, and the materials used. "We find them indispensable when there are not only fires to make, but so many gas-jets to light."

"Gas-jets?" he said inquiringly.

"Let me assist you to dress," I said. "It is some hours yet till bedtime. We will go to the library, which is more comfortable."

He had a dazed look as I said this, and was still more astonished when I brought out a pair of trousers and a dressing-gown.

"Ah!" he said, "these are the new things people are wearing now—what they call trousers. Bah! Where are my breeches?"

I went to the chiffonier in which his clothes had been always kept, and drew forth his breeches. I found them literally riddled.

"Uncle John," I said, producing them, "they are ruined by moths."

"What!" he said, "my best breeches cut up in this way! What the—oh! but it's all a dream, of course. Well, I'll try the others."

He thrust himself into the trousers, buttoned and braced them, put on the dressing-gown and laughed.

"They flap about my legs. Legs! Why, I am notorious for my muscular calves, and my legs look like pipe-stems.

"Now, what could have led me to such a dream as this. I must have been talking of trousers before I went to bed, and trousers suggested legs, and—oh, the development of the idea is quite clear!"

I assisted him—he was evidently very weak—into the library, and installed him in an easy-chair, into which he sank with a sigh of pleasure. Then I lit the gas, and he eyed me curiously.

"I see that, too," he muttered to himself. "Guy and I were talking of this new project of lighting London by inflammable air—gas, they called it. That accounts for it. But the friction matches! However, if I can remember the process and the materials when I wake up, and if it works in reality as it does in a dream, I shall be known as a famous inventor. But the queerest thing is, that while I know it is a dream, I have to keep on dreaming."

"Shall I order supper?" I said; "you have had nothing but milk."

"Milk!" he replied. "If there is anything I detest, it is milk. Order what you like."

I rang the bell, and when the servant appeared ordered supper to be served in the library. When Peter—who, impassive as he generally was, displayed by a look his astonishment at the stranger's presence—had gone out, John Trelawney said:

"That's another of the dream people. I never saw *him* before, and when I wake up won't see him again. But what—what the deuce is that?"

A mingled look of terror, doubt, and amusement went over his face as he lifted the end of his long, white beard, which he now observed for the first time. He passed his hand upward and traced the beard to his chin, and then he gave it a sharp tug.

"Of all the farrago of nonsense which comes to a man's head in dreams, this is the most absurd. A long white beard on me, a man of twenty-eight, and heavens!" he continued, as he caught a glimpse of his face in the mirror over the mantel, "there's white hair and wrinkles to correspond! This matches the thin legs. I shouldn't wonder if I turned to an old woman next, with a black satin dress, and a lot of *falbalas*."

Here he burst into a loud fit of laughter.

"What is the matter with my voice, I wonder," he exclaimed; "it's of a piece with my beard, and my wrinkles, and—my legs. If I were awake, and looked like this, and talked so, I should think I had got to be eighty at least. Won't I have a fine tale to tell to Guy in the morning."

Peter came in with a tray bearing plates, dishes, and eatables, and John with the tea-service. When they had spread the cloth on the library-table, and arranged everything my rather stately housekeeper, Mrs. Lang, sailed in.

"Mrs. Lang," I said, "let me present you to Mr. John Trelawney, who remains with us, and to whom everyone in the house will pay as much deference and attention as to me. Uncle John, this is the housekeeper, Mrs. Lang."

Mrs. Lang was evidently mystified, but she was equal to the occasion. She performed an elaborate curtsey. Uncle John, as a polite, old-young gentleman, rose and bent his body in acknowledgment.

"Now," I said, "no one need wait, as we are to have some conversation on family matters. I can even dispense with *your* attendance, Mrs. Lang."

The housekeeper sniffed faintly, but departed with the others.

"Now for the feast of Barmecide," said Uncle John gaily. "No! the tea tastes as natural as if it were tea. These chops, too, what is the matter with my teeth? Why, hang it! they're half gone. I see, all in keeping—*sans* teeth, *sans* everything."

"Uncle John," I interposed, "you must excuse me, if I caution you to be careful about your eating. As your stomach has been accustomed solely to liquid food for over eighty-four years, solid matter might——"

"Liquid food! Eighty-four years!" he burst out. "Now what could have led to such a mental vagary even

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in a dream r And knowing this to be a dream, why can't I wake myself?"

The supper passed off, though Uncle John would pause occasionally, and tap his head and smile. He evinced signs of fatigue shortly after, and I led him to a chamber, where I assisted him to disrobe, and left him.

The next morning, finding he was very weak, I had chocolate served to him in his room. The servants were evidently puzzled, and I could fancy the below-stairs parliament in active session. But they were well drilled, and evinced no surprise in our presence, and made no inquiries as to how and when this newly-found relative had come to be a visitor. About eleven o'clock my guest rose, and I assisted him to the library, where we had breakfast. While we were eating, he was startled by the screams of a steam-whistle—the railway passing within two hundred yards of the house.

"Wha—what is that?"

"Oh, nothing," I said, "but the train. We have a railway crossing over the estate, and a station within a quarter of a mile from the house."

"Railway!—train!"

The servants were listening and I changed the subject by finding fault with an egg which was overdone. When we had finished I took Uncle John into the library, got him an easy chair, and handed him one of the morning papers. He looked at it in amazement, and repeated the title.

"Why, I never heard of it before," he said; "and the type is so small that I can't read it. Oh, I see: white hair, wrinkles, thin legs, weakness, poor teeth, and so failing sight is in keeping. I wonder I am not deaf."

I took grandfather's spectacles from a drawer.

"Try these," I said.

He put them on, but shook his head.

"Perhaps you were near-sighted when you were young," I said.

"Was! I *am* near sighted."

"Try these, then," and I handed him a pair used by my father.

"Ah! these do nicely. But what stuff is this? Ocean steamer! Six days and eighteen hours!"

"Yes," I said, "quite a fast voyage across the Atlantic, but there have been faster."

"The Queen received the American Minister at Balmoral, to which he has been specially invited. Balmoral! the Queen! Queen of England, I suppose. But why not the King? Balmoral! where on earth is that?"

"It is Queen Victoria's seat in the Highlands."

"And who the—I beg your pardon—but who is Queen Victoria?"

"She is the present reigning sovereign, and succeeded William the Fourth forty-seven years since."

"Oh, she did. did she? and who was William the Fourth?"

"He was Prince William Henry."

"What, that midshipman who got trounced? But where was the Prince of Wales?"

"He succeeded his father, you know, as George the Fourth, and died without issue."

"No, I don't know. But, 'by telegraph.' What does that mean, and how do you get news from India, as I see you do here in a day? Am I expected to believe that? The dream grows queerer and queerer."

I explained the action of the electric telegraph, but he did not seem to comprehend it.

"The fantasies are wilder and wilder. The lightning is made a courier; by-and-bye it will be bottled up for lamps, and the sun will paint our portraits."

"All that has been done long since," I replied. "But the next train is nearly due, and with this field-glass you can see it from the balcony. There—I hear it in the distance. You needn't rise, I'll wheel your chair to the open window—so."

The train soon came in sight, dashed on, turned a curve, and we could hear it slow down as it approached the station. Uncle John's hands shook, partly with weakness, partly with excitement, but he seemed to have had a good sight of the engine and carriages. He sat there reflecting.

How was I to impress him with the fact of his real condition. It would have to be done, some time or other. But would it overturn his reason? I mused over it.

"Well, Nephew Guy, as you call yourself, what are you thinking about?"

"Pray," I returned, "do you remember Monsieur Delille?"

"Yes; where is he? He tried to put me to sleep, but failed."

"Uncle John, he did not fail. He succeeded."

"He did, you say. That is a little hard to believe, even in a dream."

"You have been asleep ever since, and were so until I awakened you."

"And for how many hours, pray?"

"Eighty-four years. You fell into a hypnotic slumber in 1800, and this is 1884."

Uncle John broke into a fit of laughter; but seeing my serious face, paused, and then deliberately bit his finger.

"I shall be awake presently," he said, looking at his finger. "And yet this pain—tell me all about it."

I told him all, as I have written it, but with more detail. Then I added: "Look at yourself in yonder glass. You have grown old during your artificial slumber. Action has been suspended, but not the processes of life. Read the journal you have thrown down, and you will see that the world has moved, and you have not. Clasp my hand—there, is that not flesh and blood—real, and not visionary?"

"And brother Guy?"

I took down the family record and read:

"Guy IV., has issue:

"1. *Guy* V., *born* at Trelawney Park, April 3rd, 1770; *m.* December 28th, 1794, Mary Louisa, eldest daughter of Lawrence and Gertrude Gansevoort, of Gansevoort Manor; *widower*, June 3rd, 1798; *died*, May 9th, 1855.

"2. *John*, *b.* February 1st, 1772."

"Poor old Guy," murmured Uncle John. "But go on."

"Guy V. had issue:

"1. *Guy* VI., *b.* February 1st, 1796; *m.* Alice, second daughter of Pierce and Mary Compton, June 20th, 1818; *widower*, June 9th, 1821; *d.* March 19th, 1878.

"Guy VI. has issue:

"1. *Guy* VII., *b.* October 9th, 1820; *m.* April 1st, 1850, to Grace Amaranth, sole daughter of John George Pigott, of Pigott Park, Leicestershire; *widower*, May 4th, 1870; *d.* February 5th, 1882.

"Guy VII. had issue:

"*Guy* VIII., *b.* May 1st, 1856."

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The truth seemed to possess the old man's mind. He looked at his hands and feet, felt his beard, and his countenance assumed a look of extreme terror. Would he go mad?

Suddenly he burst into a flood of tears, and I felt relieved.

"This—this is cruel," he said at length, with a sob.

"We did all we could, Uncle John," I pleaded.

"Yes, I know—I know. But to keep me in a living grave, to wake old, decrepit—it was better to have let me die while I was unconscious. I am weak—I would like to lie down."

"Do so, Uncle John, you will be better by dinner-time."

I assisted him to his chamber, where he laid down on a lounge, and I left him to his repose.

Just before dinner I sent Peter to his room to bid him prepare for the meal. The servant came back. "The old gentleman seems a little out of his head, sir. He told me to put a tinder-box in the mantelshelf."

I hurried to the chamber, where I found the old man muttering to himself. I spoke to him, saying that dinner would soon be ready.

"You are there," he said; "and you come to tell me this is no dream, and I am a hundred and twelve years old."

Then he stared vacantly and worked his fingers in a convulsive way.

I sent at once for Dr. Quitman, our family physician, while I managed to persuade the old man to get to bed. When the physician came, and before he saw his patient, though, I gave him none of the previous facts, I stated that he was my great-great-granduncle, and that he was a hundred and twelve years old. Dr. Quitman looked surprised at the relationship, and the gleam in his eye showed that he doubted the age given. He went with me to the chamber, and made the customary examination. Uncle John answering his questions in monosyllables, not always as though he perfectly understood.

"Well, doctor?" I inquired when we had come out.

"He is certainly very old," replied the physician; "he may be close upon a hundred. There is no disease—the powers of life are simply giving way. By a careful administration of stimulants—I should recommend Huxham's tincture—and by judicious nourishment, you may prolong life a little, but he will probably peaceably fade out in a very few days."

And he did. On the third day, growing weaker, and apparently without any feeling of pain, he passed away. I had my finger on his pulse. It was very weak and slow. As I stood there he muttered, and I stooped to listen. He murmured:

"Guy, it was as real—you can have no idea——"

Here he stopped. I pressed the artery, but it had ceased to beat.

THOMAS ENGLISH.

MELODY

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WHEN THE BIRDS BEGIN TO SING

BY WINIFRED GRAHAM. *Author of "Through the Valley," "Six First-Class Passengers," etc.*

SUMMARY.

Philip Roche marries Eleanor Grebby, daughter of a farmer, and they spend their honeymoon on the Continent. On their return to Richmond, Eleanor becomes friendly with a frivolous widow, Mrs. Mounteagle, against her husband's wishes.

CHAPTER V.

"THE FLY THAT SIPS TREACLE IS LOST IN THE SWEETS."

"I AM tired of arguing the subject," declares Philip hotly, rising from his chair and pacing the room. "If you *will* disregard my wishes and go your own way, well——"

"Let me, that's all!" retorts Eleanor.

"No wonder you have hardly a single friend in Richmond, if your whole time is spent with Mrs. Mounteagle," he replied.

"I don't want other friends—I dislike them, Philip, and what is the good of pretending friendship for people you don't care a button about? There is not a woman in the place that can hold a candle to Giddy."

"Oh, it's 'Giddy' now, is it?"

"Why not? I have known her nearly three months."

"Yes; and every month has been one too many. Do you think I cannot see the harm she is doing you? We might have led a happy, contented life if she were not here to poison it. What did you think of your home—before you met her? Everything was perfect! What did you say of it after?"

"Dowdy—old-fashioned—run to seed. Look at the transformation! Isn't my drawing-room a poem? Has not 'Liberty' descended like the goddess of Beauty on our abode, and made it the envy of our neighbours? Giddy has practically built me up, Philip. I owe her my dressmaker, my tailor, my style, my hats, my——"

"Oh! spare me," he interrupts, "I have heard it so often."

"Dear old fellow, *don't* be angry," coaxes Eleanor, with her old cajoling manner. "It is very hard for a poor little woman to be left alone all day, while her better half is frivoling in the City with stocks and shares, and all sorts of nice amusing things. There really is no harm in Giddy, and she's so awfully clever and entertaining."

"But I do not approve of the people you meet at her house, nor your frequent visits to town together. I don't wish my wife to be constantly seen with a woman of doubtful reputation."

"Nonsense about her reputation, it's all bosh! People are jealous of her beauty that say nasty things. She told me so herself. Besides, we only do a little shopping, and it is so dull going all by oneself."

"How do, dear?"

Eleanor has crept into his arms, and is soothing his ruffled feelings with caresses.

"It is only because I love you, Eleanor," he says, with more passionately, hungering devotion than of yore. "Her companionship is not good for you, and she is always taking you away from me. That sounds selfish, doesn't it?"

"Well, I forgive you," she whispers, "if you will be less ferocious in the future. I declare when you walk up and down—like this," imitating his stride, "and show the whites of your eyes—*so!* I want to hide under the sofa and scream."

"Oh! Eleanor, was I such a bear?"

"Much worse than a bear; he is in a cage, and cannot get out. You just stand and laugh at him, and please him with a biscuit, or tease him with a feather."

"I didn't want to quarrel before going, only you started the subject of Mrs. Mounteagle, and it is rather a red rag, you know, Eleanor, since I objected from the first."

"But I am so wickedly wilful," she sighs, peeping through her eyelashes coquettishly. She has caught the "eye-lash" trick from her next-door neighbour.

"I am sorry, dear, to have to stay in town to-night, but it

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is most important. You won't give up your party at the Hillier's?"

"Oh! no. I shall go alone. It is only one of their deadly musical evenings, with about three second-rate professionals, and a sprinkling of local talent. The Misses Hillier play the harp and violin, with particularly red arms and bony elbows, their sister-in-law sings in a throaty contralto, and the ices run out before ten."

"Is Mrs. Mounteagle asked?"

"They don't know each other, and Giddy is so glad. It gives her nearly a fit to look at them."

"Ah! yes, I remember Mrs. Hillier telling me she had not called."

"Now you are beginning again."

"But is it a fact, dear, people *don't* call?"

"And just as we had made it up, too," putting her hand over Philip's mouth.

"Well, I'll say no more. At least, I shall have the satisfaction of knowing you won't be with her to-night."

"Poor Giddy!" sighs Eleanor as he leaves; "how she is misjudged!"

"Mrs. Mounteagle," announces Sarah.

"How do, dear?" cries the widow sweetly, pressing Eleanor's cheek.

Then as the door closes: "I don't like that maid of yours, she shows one in as if one were a dressmaker or sister of mercy, and always looks at me as if my bonnet were crooked. You really ought to get a man, it gives such a much better appearance to the place."

"I do not believe Philip would have one."

"My dear, a man is the last subject I should ever think of consulting my husband on. By-the-way, Eleanor, my *fiancé* has turned up again. You know he went abroad to grow, and was not to come back for six months, but three seem to have nearly killed him. He has had typhoid fever in Antwerp, and then took a trip to New York, where he got jaundice. I must introduce you next Sunday, he is going to drive down."

"You never told me his name."

"Didn't I? *Bertie*—Herbert Dallison."

"Oh!" with an expressive intonation. "Is he fond of ices?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"They are very unwholsome, and—and you said he had been ill."

"You are going to the Hillier's to-night," Mrs. Mounteagle says, unfolding a parcel on her lap. "You intend wearing your white silk, I believe."

"Yes. It is good enough for them."

"I should think so, the cut of the skirt is lovely, but I am not altogether satisfied with the severe bodice. I want you to wear this fichu of mine, it is a perfect gem."

She holds out a cloud of spangled gauze.

"How lovely!" cries Eleanor, flinging her arms round the widow's neck.

"You're very welcome to it."

"Philip is deserting me to-night," continues Eleanor—"business in London."

"How dull you will be going and returning to your party alone. I know!" (her face lightening up as with some magic inspiration) "I'll come and stay the night with you, dear, see you dressed, and have a real good gossip up in your room about those stupid Hillier's afterwards."

Philip's words return to Eleanor.

"At least you will not be together this evening."

Yet what can she do? Besides it will be such fun to have Giddy.

So the plan is settled, and that evening Mrs. Mounteagle arrives in a flowing tea-gown, her maid unpacking a dainty dressing-bag with gold-topped ornaments, and hanging up a dress for the morning. Giddy sits in a low arm-chair watching Eleanor's toilette.

"Sarah is doing your hair abominably!" she exclaims. "You will look a fright. Here, let me show you, my good girl," addressing the maid in the superior drawl she adopts towards menials. "Twist the coil at the top—so, like a teapot handle, and let the side pieces wave loosely over the ears. You don't want to make a guy of your mistress, do you?"

Sarah resents the interference, but between them Eleanor's coiffure is eventually arranged.

"Now you are lovely, a sight for sore eyes," declares Giddy Mounteagle. "Yet what is the good after all in being beautiful for such a dowdy set? They will only hate you for it, as they hate me, the fools! We cannot help being well favoured."

"And she calls 'erself a lady!" says Sarah scoffingly, to Judith later on. "She's as different to our young mistress as chalk to cheese."

"I don't like leaving you alone," declares Eleanor after dinner.

"Afraid I shall steal something?" asks Giddy, laughing.

"Here, let me show you, my good girl."

"Don't fret, my dear, I shall be quite happy in this glorious book-land. Mr. Roche has a most enviable collection. I have rather a headache, and shall go to bed early and read. I never sleep before two or three in the morning, so don't ring, but just throw a stone at my window. I should love to let you in."

"Just as you please, dear. It is all the same to me."

"You need not sit up for Mrs. Roche," says Mrs. Mounteagle, when she goes to her room, "and, Sarah! bring me coffee in the morning, my nerves will not stand tea."

Flinging open her window, Giddy lets the chilly night air mingle with the fumes of her cigarette, as she lies on a sofa before the fire.

In the meanwhile the beautiful Mrs. Roche is causing quite a sensation at the Hillier's, who are not so dowdy after all. The smartest Richmond girls arrive on this occasion, yet the men crowd round Eleanor, who, elated by success, converses in a most effervescing style.

She finds herself using Giddy's expressions, stealing Giddy's ideas, remembering her droll sayings, and repeating them second-hand.

They seem to go down, and amuse Eleanor as much as her listeners. She has just told a smart story (rather too smart

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She is fascinated.

for the occasion), when her glance falls on a man in the doorway. He is looking straight across at her with strangely magnetic eyes. He is tall, slim, handsome. She stops speaking. The stranger awakes a new interest; she forgets the others, she wants him.

He seeks out the youngest Miss Hillier, and asks for an introduction.

"Mrs. Roche—Mr. Quinton."

Two magic words make them friends. He takes the seat of honour by her side, monopolises the conversation, and eventually disperses her admiring circle.

Eleanor is glad. She is fascinated by the profound interest he displays when she speaks of herself. Besides, from what he tells her she gathers he is a man of genius, destroyed by pessimism, given to analyse human hearts and discover their misery, to look deeply into the lives of his fellow creatures, below the platitudes and conventionalities. He is richly endowed with the divine gift of sympathy, the supreme art of discrimination, yet occasionally reveals the witty spirits of the cynic, who is cynical to please.

He sees through Eleanor's society prattle the guileless mind, the childish innocence. He recognises that as yet she is undeveloped—he mentally reviews her. She is absurd, improbable, and therefore fascinating. She is like a book with the best chapters torn out—you long to find them and never rest till you succeed.

Palmists or clairvoyants would prophesy a future for her, simply through looking in her eyes, but whether notoriety is to be won by downfalling or uprising were better left unstated. Eleanor, he decides, is neither highly-strung nor excitable, but outspoken, fresh, and conscious of her beauty, without conceit. He thinks he loves her at first sight, the lukewarm love arising from admiration, which a man may feel towards a married woman, without blame, but at the close of the evening he is certain of it.

"What have we been talking about all to-night?" asks Eleanor, with a puzzled frown, and a smile which counteracts it. "So much was frivolous and foolish I cannot remember."

"Yet every word is hidden in some secret cell of your brain. Oh, that the secret cells could be opened and revealed to our nearest and dearest. What countless forgotten treasures might be restored."

"Or what ill-spoken words and evil quarrels revived," adds Eleanor wisely.

"Thus speaks a guilty conscience," he retorts. "I could sum up my life on a sheet of foolscap. 'Preface: apparent folly, covering intents and purposes. A boyhood of ambition, a manhood of misfortune.'"

"Misfortune!"

"Yes, since I grew to realise facts; to see men and women as they *are*, not as they appear! Sometimes the bare word 'reality' fills me with such loathing for this paltry world, with its pigmy minds and soulless bodies, that I can hardly control my contempt. I pull myself together, and pray for a new set of nerves, a stronger heart, and a better flow of healthy blood to the brain."

"What a pity that nerves cannot be purchased like false teeth," says Eleanor laughing.

"Nerves are the finest satire on our human organisation, and our bodies, each a theatre of perpetual activity, the most confusing mystery of all. I believe in a dual nature existing in men and women, but the difficulties which bar our progress to perfect knowledge of each other cannot be overcome."

"Things that can't be understood are invariably irritating," sighs Eleanor.

"Some day we will think it out together," he whispers, waving her fan gently. "We shall meet again, Mrs. Roche" —speaking confidently—"for have we not a mutual friend in Mrs. Mounteagle, whom I regret is not here to-night?"

"Yes. It is strange that we should both know her."

Eleanor has risen, and is holding out her hand for the fan.

"You are not going?"

"Look at the hour! I shall be disgraced if I stay longer."

She leaves him, and bids her hostess good-night.

He is waiting in the hall for a last word.

"May I call your carriage?"

"I did not order it, as I only live three doors off."

"Then may I escort you?"

Eleanor glances at him confidingly with her large innocent eyes.

"Yes; I meant you to."

Mr. Quinton smiles, and takes her arm as they step out into the darkness.

"I knew somebody would see me home," she says, the old, childish Eleanor breaking through the "Giddy" manner. "I thought it would be much more fun than driving this step."

"Then it was premeditated."

She laughs softly.

"I wish it were not so near," murmurs Mr. Quinton.

"Mrs. Mounteagle wanted to let me in—I believe out of simple curiosity. I am to throw stones at her window. Quite romantic, isn't it?"

"May I have a shot?" he asks. "Which is the pane of beauty's shrine?"

"There, on the left of my room," pointing upwards.

A handful of gravel flies through the air. Rattle, rattle on the glass.

Then Giddy appears in a white *robe de chambre*, her dark hair falling in waves about her shoulders.

"All right, I am coming down."

A moment later she stands before them, laughing and shaking hands with Carol Quinton, two small, bare feet peeping from under her airy garb, her hair still unfettered.

"It is a delightful surprise to see *you*, Carol," she cries. "I have sent all the servants to bed, Eleanor, but told them to leave out some aspic and champagne, as I know the Hilliers starve their guests. What do you say to an impromptu supper party? It would be so delightfully unconventional."

She has dragged Carol into the hall and closed the door.

"Yes, do come in," echoes Eleanor feebly, pleased and yet awed by Giddy's suggestion. She is looking somewhat

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shrewdly at those delicate pink toes, and the dark mane falling over the white gown.

"Shall I get you some shoes?" she whispers.

"No, dear, Nature is better than leather, and more *négligé*."

She speaks in a tone that silences Eleanor, who feels she has been dense and awkward.

"Come along," says Giddy, leading the way, and lighting the silver candelabra in the dining-room. "Do make Eleanor take off that heavy fur cloak, Carol. Oh! isn't this nice?" as he fills her glass with champagne. "Was there ever a jollier little trio?" leaning back in her chair and surveying the other two complacently. "Pass me a brown sandwich, I am hungry if you are not, and the stuff inside them gives you an appetite. What do you call it?—something beginning with an 'L.'"

The nectar of the gods puts a bright sparkle into Eleanor's eyes, their lustrous beauty gleams on Giddy and Carol Quinton in luxurious contentment. She permits her guests to smoke, and tries a whiff from Mrs. Mounteagle's cigarette, finally lighting one up on her own behalf.

She dislikes smoking in reality, but considers it smart to imitate the widow.

"Have you really missed hearing Kitty Bell at the 'Frivolity'?" asks Mrs. Mounteagle, giving Carol a light from her cigarette. "My dear boy, she is perfectly charming, the most *piquante* little singer of the day. Why the chorus of her last song has haunted me ever since—the tune, not the words. It went something like this, as far as I can remember:

"Poor little Flo,
How should she know?
A simple country maiden
From the wilds of Pimlico."

As Giddy Mounteagle sings the lines a latchkey turns in the hall lock, footsteps advance down the passage, the dining-room door opens, and Philip Roche stands before them!

Philip Roche stands before them!

CHAPTER VI.

Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread.

Eleanor's blood runs cold at the sight of her husband. She knows well what he will think of this impromptu supper-party. Giddy's feet for the moment are mercifully concealed by the table-cloth. She half rises, however, and stretches out her hand to Mr. Roche.

"Eleanor was just wishing you would come back," she murmurs sweetly.

"I returned quite by chance," he answers coldly, knowing her words to be untrue. "Brown could not put me up after all," turning to his wife, "so I drove down."

"Philip, this is Mr. Quinton; he kindly saw me home, and—and——?"

"We persuaded him to come in," adds Giddy, as Carol, grasping the situation, says pleasantly:

"Delighted to make your acquaintance, Mr. Roche."

But, though Philip is far too gentlemanly to show his disapproval, all the hilarity has gone from the evening. Perhaps it is due to Eleanor's sudden tranquility, the pallor of her face, and nervous hesitating speech. She is no adept at concealing her emotions or "passing things off" like Giddy and Carol. She leaves the rest of the conversation to them, and while Philip is seeing Mr. Quinton out slips upstairs for Giddy's shoes and beseeches her to put them on.

"My husband will think it so odd," she whispers. "I saw him looking at your hair."

"Yes," replies Mrs. Mounteagle, "men always admire it. But don't be alarmed, dear, I am far too fond of you to care about making a friend of your husband." Then she saunters up to bed, with a pitying glance at Eleanor's pretty, troubled face.

"I wonder if she'll have sense enough to hold her own?" thinks Giddy. "Poor little fool, to be sat upon already!" She hears them come up, and creeping from her room steals on tip-toe to their door, with her ear to the keyhole.

There are high words within, and some unpleasant allusions to herself in distinctly masculine tones. Eleanor is heard crying, but her tears do not hasten a reconciliation.

Giddy goes quietly back.

"Bah!" she exclaims, stretching out her hands to the fire. "What rot! As if there was any harm!"

She stirs up the blaze and laughs. "I shall breakfast in bed," she says to herself.

* * * * * * *

"He doesn't understand me. He wants me to be so good, so uninteresting, so *domesticated!* I believe he married me for that. Oh! oh! oh!"

Mrs. Roche is wringing her hands and sobbing on the sofa.

"Another quarrel?" sighs Giddy, stroking Eleanor's soft hair. "Come, come, this won't do. Pluck up your courage, go your own way, act as you like, and laugh at your husband. He *can't* scold you if you laugh! Tears will only gratify his vanity, besides they are disastrous to beauty

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Once your eyes become swollen, and your nose red, you can no longer hold your own. Your sense of superiority is gone, you are undone!"

"How awful I look," sighs Eleanor, rising and facing the glass. "I hope Sarah will say 'not at home' if anybody calls."

Steals to their door.

"I am not going to let you stay in and mope, just because Mr. Roche happened to leave in a lecturing mood this morning. I have arranged a little tea in town at my club."

"Your club? I did not know you had one."

"Oh! yes, and I am on the committee. Nearly all the artists and literary women have their clubs nowadays, so I and some friends started one for people who do absolutely nothing. It is very useful to members with jealous husbands. We call it the 'Butterflies' Club,' a land of cosy corners and rendezvous. You really will have to join it Eleanor, if Philip goes on like this. I will put you up at our next meeting. It is rather an expensive luxury, ten guineas a year, and a Turkish bath attached."

Giddy places her arm affectionately through Eleanor's, and leads her to the door.

"Come up and dress dear, my carriage will be here in half an hour, and I don't intend going without you."

Eleanor cheers up at the prospect. She is like an April day.

Giddy fans her friend's flushed face, rubs some powder gently with her fingers round the swollen eyes, and showers eau-de-Cologne on the burning forehead.

"Do not throw yourself into any more fevers," she says; "life is too short, and sorrow too long."

Eleanor is soon attired in green velvet and fur, for Mrs. Mounteagle declares it is necessary to be smart at the Butterflies' Club.

They drive away together in the widow's snug little brougham.

Herbert Dallison is waiting outside the club door to receive them; he starts, colours, and stares at Eleanor as Giddy introduces him.

"Say 'how do you do?' prettily," she cries in a bantering tone, "and don't gape like an overgrown school-boy, if you love me, Bertie!"

Mr. Dallison holds out a limp hand in a grey glove, smiles feebly, and thinks of the "relics" and the cat!

"Why are you not at the Junior Conservative?" murmurs Eleanor, laughing softly, "instead of dangling round the 'Butterflies'!"

"Ah! you remember my card."

"Yes, I have it still. I hope you will make Giddy a good husband," speaking demurely.

"I ought to, after all I've gone through for her sake. It is a mercy I have come home alive after my illnesses, and the dangerous young people I met on the Continent."

"Let me introduce you to our coming member, the Butterfly that is to be," says Giddy, and Eleanor turns to face Carol Quinton.

Mrs. Mounteagle laughs merrily at her astonished look. "I did not tell you he was coming, but now we are just a cosy quartette."

"I am afraid," murmurs Mr. Quinton, "that my visit to your charming home the other evening was ill-timed. Mr. Roche seemed somewhat taken aback by my presence."

"Yes," stammers Eleanor, growing red.

"I was so vexed *you* should be annoyed," he replies, "that I could not go home, but paced the pavement for an hour, watching the light in your window."

Eleanor's eyes expand. She has a way of looking "surprise" without saying it, and the look lasts quite a long while, during which an ordinary person would have expressed their feelings several times over. Then the wonderment fades like a magic-lantern slide, and she talks of something else.

"Have you ever seen the sun burst suddenly through a fog? It is like your smile," says Carol, gazing into Eleanor's face. "Why don't you always smile?"

"Because I am not always happy," she responds quietly.

A pained expression steals into the man's eyes, and Eleanor flushes rosy under his look. It is deep, searching, admiring; it confuses her. She wants to push it away like something oppressive, a funeral veil dark and heavy, or a chloroformed handkerchief, stifling breath!

"Not happy!"

The words break from him with bitter irony.

"You have youth, beauty, personal magnetism, the power to charm, eyes that might wreck a life every day in the year. You need not scheme for love nor demand it. It is yours by natural right. Why is not your life one of wildest exhilaration, conquests, pleasures? Who could deny you anything, Mrs. Roche?"

Eleanor knows well, but is too loyal to say. She would sooner bite out her tongue than answer "Philip!" Yet he would rob her of the companionship of her dearest friend, would deny her intercourse with Carol Quinton, could he hear these low-whispered words of adulation! As she thinks of it, her husband takes the form of some heartless monster, sapping her youth's freedom, fettering her down to his side like a dragon-fly on a pin, she can only flap her wings faintly and gasp in vain.

"Were you sorry to see me to-day?" asks Mr. Quinton, watching the firelight playing on Eleanor's figure.

"No, I was very miserable this afternoon; I had been crying. I like meeting you, it does me good."

As she speaks the electric light is turned up, and a little groan issues from Giddy.

"Just as we were all so comfortable in the gloaming!" pulling her hand from Bertie's with a pout.

"Butterflies should like light better than darkness," he drawls.

"I want to look round now," cries Eleanor, enthusiastically viewing the beautiful room. "Anyone could see that Giddy had something to do with this."

"Here is a pretty little writing-table behind a screen, with a rose-coloured lamp," says Carol. "When you are a member, Mrs. Roche, will you sometimes write to me?"

"What should I have to say?" she asks innocently, surprised at the suggestion.

"Tell me about yourself, if only in one line: 'I live—I breathe—I have my being.'"

"What an odd letter!"

"I like odd things, I like odd people; I hate conventionality, and scorn the commonplace. I know a girl who always speaks the truth, and everybody hates her. She glories in it."

"How splendid to be hated for such a cause!" declares Eleanor.

"She never will embrace a woman she dislikes, so many people think it is necessary, and the kiss of detestation is more fashionable in Society than that of real affection.

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The touch thrills her with bewildering emotion.

For myself, I think a kiss is overrated. It should be looked on in the light of a hand-shake—harmless and agreeable, a mark of courtesy, endearment, or respect."

"Then you would have to explain it," says Eleanor. "'I kiss you because I idolise you;' 'I kiss you because you are estimable;' 'I kiss you because you are rich and entertain me.' No, it would never answer."

She is fingering the delicate, scented writing paper.

"How nice this address is in gold, with a big butterfly in the corner. I have some invitations to answer, and I should like to do it here—it looks so well."

Eleanor seats herself, and draws the paper towards her. "Mrs. Roche regrets that owing to no previous engagement, she is unable to accept Mrs. B's dull invitation for Thursday!"

Carol laughs.

"Have you an 'At home' on Thursday week?"

"Yes, but I shall decline it."

"Don't," he whispers. "Accept—let them expect you—and fail to turn up. Come and meet me instead."

Eleanor trembles suddenly and grows pale. She feels herself face to face with temptation.

"No," she replies faintly. "But I shall be in, and *if* you call——"

"*If!* there is no 'if' in the matter. I would come every day if you let me."

"Every day!" Oh! how alluring it sounds.

She twists her wedding ring round and round, looking down on the carpet. She remembers the pattern that night in her dreams, a red Maltese cross on a blue ground. The blue and red swim before her eyes now like the colours in a kaleidoscope. A solitary tear rises in her left eye and falls on the blotter.

"If only I might do as I like!" she murmurs.

"'Might' is a word you could blot from your vocabulary. Why not?"

"Oh! don't—don't—don't," as he lays his hand on hers, and the touch thrills her with bewildering emotion.

"Where is Giddy? Oh! Giddy, take me home, it is nearly half-past five, and Philip will be back."

Mrs. Mounteagle raises her eyebrows at Eleanor's agitated tones.

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"You told me he would be late this evening."

"Did I?" easing on her gloves.

Carol is standing behind with her cloak. His hands linger a moment as they fall on her shoulder, and he turns up the warm fur collar about her ears.

"My mite of a brougham only holds two," says Giddy, "and Bertie is coming with me, so I dare say Mr. Quinton will see you home in a hansom."

The suggestion amazes Eleanor. Really Giddy has the most delightful ideas, and as to Philip's prejudices—well her thoughts on this subject are better not divulged.

One moment she is a panic-stricken girl, afraid at the very word "flirtation," the next, inconsistent, susceptible, a slave to Giddy's whims, easily led, easily beguiled.

She can hear her heart beating, as Carol helps her into the hansom. It is dark already, dark as the unknown future, while they whirl away in the gloom.

"It is cold," says Eleanor.

He wraps her furs closer round her.

"*Cold?*" with a tender glance.

There is a volume in the word.

* * * *

Philip in the meanwhile is having tea with his cousin, Erminie Henderson.

She is a thoroughly staunch woman, with the warmest of hearts, sociable, bright, reliable, always ready with a helping hand where help is needed, yet human enough to err occasionally. Philip has known her from a child, has seen her weaknesses and excellences. The former overrule the latter. She is fond of him in a cousinly spirit, and delighted at his visit.

He . . . leans his head on his arms over the mantel-border.

For a long time they talk on ordinary subjects, till at last Erminie folds her arms, looks him searchingly up and down, and asks straight out:

"What's the matter, Phil?"

He starts, but returns her glance openly.

"To tell you the truth, I have come to confide in you—to ask you a favour."

"Good," replies Erminie, who has heard many a confidence in her day. "Go on."

"You know but little of my wife—she is young, quite a girl—very easily influenced."

His words come shortly. He breathes hard. "I would tell *you* what I could not say to any other creature. It is early days, and we have begun to quarrel. She has made great friends with a frivolous widow—a woman next door—whom I warned her against from the first.

"I have done all in my power to stop the intimacy, but protestations only appear to strengthen it. This woman has got Eleanor entirely under her thumb; she is like soft clay in her hands. I thought I could mould my wife, who was utterly uninformed, a little country farm girl. But Giddy Mounteagle has proved stronger, cleverer than I. Perhaps her method is easier to follow, perhaps I have misunderstood Eleanor from the first. Day by day she drifts farther from me, and yet *if* such a thing were possible, I love her more."

He rises and leans his head on his arms over the mantel-border.

"Help me, Erminie; you might do so much."

"How?"

"Come and stay with us—use *your* influence with Eleanor."

Miss Henderson seems confused.

"I should be delighted. I would do anything for you, but——"

Philip looks up quickly, his eyebrows rise involuntarily. He has never yet known a "but" from Erminie's lips, when asking her aid.

"The 'buts' of this world are its stumbling blocks."

"I am going to be married very shortly, I am in the midst of 'trosseauing.'"

"Ah! I had forgotten," he replies, smothering his disappointment.

Erminie makes a resolve.

"I'll come, Phil," she says, holding out her hand.

"But it will be so inconvenient!"

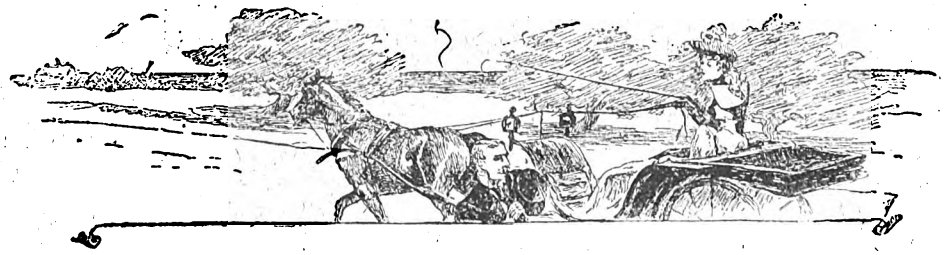
"Never mind. I shall interest Eleanor in my things, and try to win her from the widow. Erminie Henderson *versus* Giddy Mounteagle. What is the betting, Phil?"

He grasps her hands, and wrings them heartily.

"You are the best little woman that ever lived!" he says. "You shall not be isolated from Nelson's society, for we will ask him, too. I suppose he can come?"

"What do *you* think?" cried Erminie, laughing.

(To be continued.)



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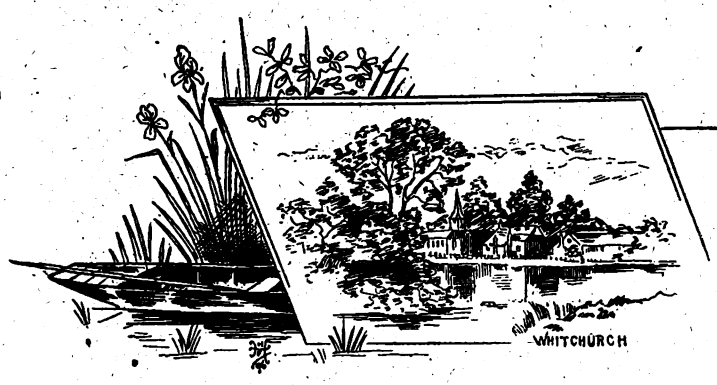

A POINT OF HONOUR.

"EVERYTHING'S settled," said Clavignac cheerfully, entering the café where Fougeret, surrounded by the usual group of journalists and professional men who frequented the place, awaited his return, "pistols, twenty paces, firing to go on till a result is reached."

"Good!" said Fougeret calmly, "and the rendezvous?"

"Vezinet racecourse, ten a.m. Then on to Asnières. Order me a carriage for eight o'clock and be sure to have the same driver. He'll bring us luck."

"As you say."

"And do not forget the doctor. The pistols I'll attend to; I have a brand-new set and it's a fine chance to try them."

"I leave all to you."

And with a warm hand-clasp to Clavignac, Fougeret turned, nodded a hasty adieu to the rest of his friends, and left the room.

"A cool head, that Fougeret," admiringly remarked the sporting editor of a morning daily.

"Deuced cool!" came in a chorus from the group of men behind, as if, in some way, their comrade's courage reflected credit upon them.

"He ought to be cool, too," declared Clavignac, pouring himself out a glass of absinthe. "Fougeret is not a chicken at this business; his fourth affair, if I count right."

"So it is," responded the journalist respectfully. "He shall head the line in my forthcoming series of the noted duellists of Paris."

Meanwhile Fougeret had passed into the street. At the door of the café he had paused a moment as if to reflect; then, with a decided gesture, he started down the boulevard at a rapid rate. Presently he halted before the window of a big book shop filled with placards and gaily-bound volumes. Prominently displayed in the front row were a dozen or so dainty little pamphlets neatly stamped on the back: "Contes Roses, Armand Fougeret, Third Edition."

He opened the door, entered and passing between the long files of book-laden cases demanded of a clerk:

"M. Lavine—is he in?"

"In the office alone, sir."

Fougeret turned to the right and tapped at the door.

"Come in," responded a voice beyond.

Fougeret obeyed. The publisher, a man as young as himself nearly, with blonde beard and lively eyes, met him cheerfully.

"Come in, come in," said he, "glad to see you, too; 'Contes Roses' going splendidly. You saw them in the window. Third edition already. But what can I do for you to-day?"

"Can't you guess?" replied Fougeret, smiling in turn.

"Money? The deuce!" cried the publisher, his brow clouding visibly; "always money. You have already drawn in advance it seems to me."

"True, but I go out to-morrow, and it is necessary——"

"A duel!" broke in the other, "with St. Landry, of course, for his article on 'Contes Roses.' You are right, my friend, entirely right. The critique was in bad taste, and has affected our sales. Now, a duel as an offset will be an excellent advertisement, and, better still, will cost us nothing. Every paper in Paris will have the affair in full, and in giving the cause of the quarrel, will speak of the book. A capital, admirable idea. Ten louis will be enough?"

"Amply sufficient."

"There they are, then," said the publisher, piling ten pieces of gold before the author, while the clerk drew up a receipt.

"A thousand thanks," Fougeret answered as he gathered up the money.

"Not at all, not at all," said the other, carefully shutting the receipt in his desk. "Always ready to oblige you. I count on seeing you at the Varieties to-morrow night."

Fougeret took the hand extended to him and went out.

It was now five o'clock, and Fougeret took his way to the Madeleine, briskly keeping step to a lively opera air that he whistled between his teeth, till he reached the throng of public vehicles that crowd the streets of that quarter. Bearing in mind his friend's injunction touching the choice of a driver, he hunted up the wheeled mascot, instructed him to call for Clavignac at eight sharp the next morning, and then turned his steps towards the Saint Lazare station.

These preparatory details did not seem to disturb him at all; he knew them all. Every affair was the same, and as he walked along he ran over in his mind the duels that he had already been engaged in. The first was seven years back, at Savigny-sur-Orze, where he had made his journalistic *début* on a local paper. A follower of the Noirville candidacy, he had found himself arrayed in fierce opposition to the Legitimist organ in a controversy that wound up in the field. He was wounded, but Noirville was elected by a large majority.

The second occurred from a Bourse transaction, where he figured as Noirville's secretary, a connection that involved him in a dispute with a jealous colleague, who sought a quarrel and found a sword thrust. The third was not very long after the second, and close on

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its heels came the ruin of his patron, Noirville, whose speculations terminated in a sudden collapse. With the great banker's fall went all the secretary's prospects, and Fougeret's little savings were also swallowed up in the general whirlpool.

Despondent at first, Fougeret rallied quickly, and sturdily set to work to recover lost ground. He had others to think of besides himself—his brave little wife, whom he had married in days of prosperity, and who had clung to him closer than ever in the hour of misfortune. The thought of her and his two little children stimulated his efforts and strengthened him in the struggle for existence.

Through his connection with Noirville, Fougeret knew a number of journalists, and through the kindness of one of them the doors of a review were opened to the young writer, whose contributions were received with marked approval by the literary world. His first novel achieved a brilliant success, and the comedy taken from it met an enthusiastic reception on its first performance at the "Odeon."

From that time on, his success was assured, and he, in consequence, began to acquire enemies. The present collection of some of his articles into a volume entitled "Contes Roses," had drawn from the pen of the cavilling St. Landry a critique so scathing, bitter, and unjust, that Fougeret, acting on his friends' advice, had sent his seconds to his jealous colleague.

And to-morrow he would be on the field as calm and careless as ever. What greater satisfaction could be given him? thought Fougeret, as he halted before his modest house and turned the key in the door.

"At last, Armand," said a soft voice coming from the kitchen; "I am so glad. Wait in the dining-room; dinner is ready."

He entered the room. The table was set with four plates, and looked so tempting and inviting that the young man gave a contented sigh. Then the door of the kitchen opened, revealing a dainty little woman, a trifle pale, with very blue eyes and very blonde hair, bearing a smoking tureen, followed by a four-year-old baby, who solemnly brought up the rear with the ladle.

"But how is this?" Armand inquired, seating himself and unrolling his napkin, after tenderly kissing his wife and children, "you are waiting on the table? Where is Rose?"

"Rose," replied the little woman, with a shade of embarrassment. "Rose is gone. I sent her away."

"Sent her away?" said Armand, surprised. "And why?"

"She was dishonest," responded Claudine. "I could not keep her. I paid her a week in advance and dismissed her. You owe your dinner to Georget and me."

"Yes," said Georget gravely, "it was us. Don't you like the soup, papa?"

"Delicious!" declared Armand; "you are famous cooks. But," dropping his voice a little, "where did you get the money, Claudine, to pay her?"

"I used what you gave me this week for the house. I knew that since your new book was nearly completed you could go to your publisher to-morrow morning and ask an advance."

Armand trembled.

"So you see," continued his wife, "we can get along nicely. I would rather wait, of course, till the novel is finished, but I do not think I am strong enough to go without eating till then. I have the will, but not the power, you know."

"And the money you shall have," broke in Armand hastily, "you will tire yourself out. I will have it—I will take it—two, or even three hundred francs, if you desire."

"That will be better," Claudine assented with a charming air of content, "because then I shall not have to part with my little piano. I did not intend you to know, but I found it a superfluous article of luxury, and they were coming to-morrow to take it away. Three hundred francs will get a nurse for the little one and many needed things besides."

"I see," said Armand with a sad smile, "that the money will not last long."

"But in three weeks' time your book will be finished and we shall be rich again. Then I can have a new dress. This has been made over so many times that there is scarcely enough left to hold the threads together."

"Yes," replied Armand, gazing consciously at the little threadbare gown, "I know—I know."

"And you need some new clothes, too, my dear; and a new dress for Georget. Why, we will spend at least fifteen hundred francs, my dear."

"Fifteen hundred francs," repeated Armand thoughtfully.

"Fully fifteen hundred. A tremendous sum for us at present, dear, but your novel will bring us at least three thousand, and to think that twenty days will see it finished!"

"Twenty days," echoed Armand, speaking like an automaton.

"Ah, how happy we shall be!" Claudine went on, her eyes sparkling at the prospect of the pleasure she saw in advance. "We can pass the summer at the seaside; Georget can have a little red cap, and we'll all enjoy ourselves as we did four years ago, when we were rich. How it all comes back to me, and with it all the other pleasures that I owe you. Kiss me, dearest!" and the loving little woman threw her arms about her husband's neck, who embraced her tenderly.

"But really," said Claudine, when she had disengaged herself from Armand's arms, "it is nine o'clock already. I must put baby to bed, lock up the house and see you settled at work before I go. Come!"

And taking the lamp she preceded her husband into the little library that adjoined the bedroom.

"There," said she, raising her lips for a parting kiss, "now work fast, get through, and remember that our happiness depends on these pages."

Left alone, Armand seized his pen but found it impossible to write a single line. Other thoughts which refused to be banished occupied his mind. His head on his hand, and staring vacantly into space, he remained in one position for two hours.

Presently a light tap sounded on the door.

"Armand," murmured the soft voice, "I am going to bed. Baby's asleep and everything's locked up safe and secure. Don't work too late—you should not weary yourself, deary."

The words recalled him to himself. He looked at the paper. It was blank.

"Come," muttered he, "this won't do. I must get to work!" and resolutely beginning he wrote on and on with feverish haste, filling five or six pages without raising his head. Suddenly he stopped. He had just written the words placed by himself in the mouth of one of his characters: "So be it; if a duel you are seeking a duel you shall have."

"A duel!" he cried, "why, I am going to fight a duel myself!"

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And a vision of the morrow passed swiftly before his eyes—the open clearing, the group of seconds, two men dressed in black facing each other, pistols pointing at the grass awaiting the signal, while the sunbeams sifted through the trees and the birds sang joyously. But the scene changed suddenly. It was a man he saw now, pale and with closed eyes, lying on a litter, while one of the carriers stood knocking at a door—his door, as he recognised instantly. The woman who ran to meet the *cortège*—the trembling creature who, with a terrible cry, threw herself upon the body—he recognised her, too. It was Claudine!

Armand rose hastily and rapidly paced the room. The thing was true. To-morrow he was to fight. To-morrow, pistol in hand, he would be risking his own life to take another's.

His life! Great God! did it belong to him? Had he the right to dispose of it? Did he not owe it, as much as he owed money, to those who depended upon him? Were he dead, what would become of his wife and children, thrown helplessly on the mercy of his terrible creditors? He had no means. There wasn't as much as a hundred-franc note in the house. His sole dependence was his pen, his brain, and his talent. Where would they be to-morrow?

And his little wife, so frail, so delicate, what was in store for her? The hospital. And after that? His children, too. Georget, so bright, so happy, so intelligent; his little girl, his merry darling, what would become of her?

Fougeret continued to nervously pace up and down. The veins in his temple throbbed to bursting. He moistened a towel and bound it about his head. The cold water helped to cool his burning brain. Now he saw it all clearer. He had exaggerated the situation. A duel was not necessarily fatal. Had he not fought three already, and was not he still alive on the verge of a fourth?

Yes; but then he was alone in the world. His life was his own; he had a right to dispose of it as he pleased. He had no wife to leave behind, no children to leave fatherless, penniless, and helpless. And as these thoughts began again to whirl through his brain, he fancied that he could see the shining barrel of the pistol, with the little, round, dark hole aimed directly between his eyes.

He tried to shake off the feeling, to think of other things. It refused to vanish. He was responsible for those he loved. They lived through him, and they would perish without him. The ball that struck him would take more than one life. There would be three other victims, three to whom he owed love, happiness, and bread. Great God! How terrible it all was!

But another thought, equally cruel, tortured his soul—his honour.

He knew his comrades and the scoffing strollers of the boulevards. He heard their comments and their pitiless mockery. What were they saying? "A coward!" No! Impossible. Some of his comrades would surely defend him. Men were good at heart. Some one would be found that could understand.

"Armand," cried an anxious voice from an adjoining room, "is anything the matter, dear? You have been talking to yourself so loudly, so strangely, for more than an hour. Are you ill, dear?"

"No, no, little one!" returned he, going to the door. "No, do not worry. I—I am working."

"Dear, good boy!" murmured Claudine with a smile. Then, as the lids fell heavily over the sleepy eyes, she added softly, drowsily:

"Just think, Armand, what would become of us—if you were—to be ill—the babies and me. Good-night, dear."

And the loving wife resumed her interrupted dream.

At the other end of the room, tucked in her little crib, smiling and peaceful, her little hands clasped across her bosom, little Georget slept tranquilly.

A sudden storm of tears met Armand's cheeks. He rushed to his desk, caught up a sheet of paper, and wrote furiously.

* * * * *

At half-past ten next morning a man irreproachably clad in black stood on the Vezinet field holding out a letter with agitated air to another individual equally anxious and no less solemn.

"Is it possible?" cried the first.

"Simply incredible!" responded the second.

"He forgets himself and reflects upon us."

"Which shall not happen," cried both in a breath.

And with a grave air and measured steps the two men advanced towards the opposing group, who were viewing these proceedings with a puzzled air.

"Messieurs," said one of the two, speaking clearly in the midst of a general silence, "we regret to announce that our principal and former friend, M. Armand Fougeret, will not be on the field to-day. He declines to fight. It is needless to add," continued he, replacing the hat on his head with a sweeping gesture, "that we are entirely at your service—in M. Fougeret's place."

Le Vier.

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In the summer of 18— I was living in the city of New York, and occupied the position of foreign editor on one of the leading journals.

A journalist who does his work thoroughly has little time for amusement, and, after a while, even loses his taste for it. I had one relaxation only, but that was a great one—music. I was passionately devoted to opera—never missed a first night, and on one of those occasions began the singular series of events related in this brief narrative.

I was seated in the stalls waiting for the rising of the curtain, when I observed two persons enter one of the proscenium boxes—a middle-aged man and a young lady. I was certain I had seen the former somewhere. He was low of stature, had a commanding forehead, and wore a heavily-matted beard, already grizzled, which descended nearly to his breast. The young lady was a beautiful blonde, but her face was entirely unfamiliar to me, while I had certainly met her escort before. Where had I seen him?

I was still looking curiously at the pair when a third person entered the box, and I recognised a well-known officer of the detective force. He approached the young lady's escort, leaned forward, and said a few words to him. His head turned quickly and I could see his eyes flash, but he rose and accompanied the officer to the rear of the box, where they remained some moments in conversation. He then returned, said something to the young lady, and they disappeared from the box.

The whole affair was perfectly plain. The stranger had been arrested, but so quietly that it had attracted no attention and after speculating idly upon this rather singular incident, I dismissed it from my mind as of no personal interest to me.

I returned from the opera about midnight, and was about to begin my night's work, when a messenger brought me a note. It was dated from a well-known hotel on Fifth Avenue, and contained these words:

Dear Friend Hartley,—I am sorry to inconvenience you at so late an hour, but I need a friend to vouch for my character, and found your name in the directory. Your police have arrested me for theft, and my daughter is much disturbed.

Your Friend,

Magnus (of Switzerland).

Magnus of Switzerland! So the stranger was my old travelling companion in the Oberland—Dr. Magnus. He was much changed, but I certainly ought to have known him. I had made his acquaintance about ten years before in the Alps, where he was exploring the glaciers, and from the first he had impressed me as a remarkable person. I knew little of him. From chance speeches I supposed him to be a native of Saxony; that he had graduated as a Doctor of something at Gottingen, and had lived in France and England, as he spoke both languages almost without accent. Long association had produced a warm friendship between us, but when I had parted with him I had never expected to see him again, and now here he was in New York indicted on a charge of felony.

A cab was waiting at the door, and I was driven to the hotel, where I found Dr. Magnus in a private room, with the police officer seated opposite him.

He rose, and we exchanged a warm grasp of the hand.

"My dear Magnus," I exclaimed, laughing, "what brought you to the States, and what on earth tempted you to commit a felony?"

A slow smile came to his face, and he replied, with his slight foreign accent:

"I confess appearances are against me. It seems a lady in this hotel has been robbed of some diamonds—she occupied the room next to my own—and, as I took some stones to a jeweller to be set yesterday, I am arrested as the criminal."

I was delighted to meet Dr. Magnus again, and felt in a jesting humour.

"You took diamonds to a jeweller to have them set? That is a suspicious circumstance," I said.

"It seems so," he replied. "I was not pleased with the styles shown me, and my friend, the jeweller, was offended, I think. He probably saw a notice of the robbery, and this has led to my arrest."

"Oh, but you have only to call on the lady to describe her diamonds, and then produce yours. I will remain with you, and in the morning we will clear up the whole affair."

As the police officer was a personal acquaintance of mine, matters were soon arranged. I gave him my word that Dr. Magnus would appear to answer the charges against him, and the officer then retired with a polite bow.

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He had scarcely disappeared when Dr. Magnus rose and going to the door of the drawing-room, called:

"Frederica."

The door opened quickly, and the young lady whom I had seen with him at the opera came into the apartment. Her beauty, as I then got a good view of her, quite dazzled me. She was tall, apparently twenty, and had brown hair worn low on the forehead; large blue eyes, and an expression of such exquisite sweetness and modesty that it afterwards haunted me.

"My dear," said Dr. Magnus, "this is my friend Hartley whom I have spoken of so often. The friend of the father ought not to be a stranger to the daughter."

The young lady held out her hand with a shy smile, and then looked anxiously at her father.

"Don't fear, there will be no further trouble," said Dr. Magnus, in reply to the look, "and now, my dear, go and get some rest; all this excitement is bad for you."

An expression of relief came to her face, and, kissing her father on the forehead, she bowed to me, and returned to her chamber.

Dr. Magnus resumed his seat, and, without waiting for my questions, briefly explained his presence in the City. His wife, a native of England, had died soon after his visit to Switzerland, leaving an only daughter, and, as the child's health was delicate, he had taken her to Teneriffe for the benefit of the mild climate. It had proved, however, too enervating, and, hearing the air and mineral springs of Virginia recommended, he had come to America and taken up his residence in south-western Virginia, where his daughter's health had become completely restored. He was now returning after a summer excursion through Canada, by way of Niagara.

Upon my expressing a wish to see the diamonds, he produced the case, and showed me the jewels, which were in the form of octahedron, and quite dazzled me.

"These strike me as rather uncommon," I said.

"They are very uncommon."

"They are probably heirlooms, or did you purchase them?"

"Neither," said Dr. Magnus briefly. "I manufactured them myself. They are crystallized carbon, and they have stood every test as pure diamonds. They retain the shape of crystallization, as all diamonds would, if not subjected to attrition."

"And they are worth——"

"One hundred thousand pounds, I suppose," said Dr. Magnus, laying the case on the table.

"Well," I said, with a feeling of amazement, "your discovery is certainly wonderful."

"I have made others far more important—one especially, but I dislike to speak of it."

He turned his head quickly, and I could see his eyes flash.

"Dislike to speak of it?"

"It is extremely deadly, and perhaps it is my duty to bury it in my own breast. But men are certain to make bad use of it; but, after all, that is not my concern. The student's duty is to extend the limits of knowledge——"

A knock at the door interrupted the speaker, and the police officer came in, bowing and smiling. He had come, he said, to make Dr. Magnus an apology. The stolen diamonds had been found on the person of the lady's maid, and he returned expressing regrets.

As it was now daylight, I took my leave, promising to call again when my friend had taken some rest. When I returned, he had driven out, and I only saw him again for a moment as he was leaving the city.

"Come and see me," he said; "it would be a great pleasure. Stay—I will trace you a *carte de la route*."

And he wrote some words on a card.

"We can then return to the subject we were discussing when we were interrupted," he said.

"I will certainly make you a visit as soon as possible," I replied.

And exchanging a warm pressure of the hand with Dr. Magnus and the beautiful Frederica, I took leave of them.

* * * * *

These things took place in August. About the middle of September I was set down by the railway train at a little wayside station in one of the wildest parts of south-western Virginia.

I had come to make my promised visit to Dr. Magnus, and was impelled by two motives—love and curiosity.

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To come to the point in a few words, I was very much in love with Frederica. I was thirty-three, and had never seriously loved a woman, and now what romance writers called my fate, had come in a single moment. The blue eyes haunted me, and the shy smile of the exquisite lips followed me everywhere. One of the most remarkable of all human events had occurred. A man had met a woman, passed a few moments with her, and she had become all the world to him.

He had grown taciturn and absent-minded.

I need not say that I had an additional motive for my visit—to ascertain the nature of that deadly discovery to which Dr. Magnus had alluded. Upon arriving at his house I saw Frederica waiting to receive me. She seemed a thousand times more beautiful than when I had seen her in New York, and held out her hand with the old, shy smile. It was only when she coloured slightly that I became aware of a simple circumstance—that I was looking at her in silence, and still held her hand.

Dr. Magnus, who had been away, returned in the evening, greeted me as cordially as I could wish, and then began the most delightful month of my life. The days passed like a dream. I hunted in the mountains, fished in the river, passed hours in my host's library—full of rare and curious volumes—and took long rides on horseback with Frederica. Of these rides I will not speak—the subject would carry me much too far. Let me come to another—a long interview which I held with Dr. Magnus, and what followed it.

I had seen little of my host since the first few days of my visit. He seemed to be absorbed in some mysterious occupation, and I had found it impossible to renew the conversation broken off in New York in reference to his great discovery. He had grown taciturn and absent-minded; regularly retired after breakfast to his laboratory, and, though he had conducted me to it at once on the day after my arrival, he had revealed none of its secrets to me. I saw only a large apartment filled with machinery, crucibles, retorts, and the usual appliances of an experimental chemist. He always kept the key of the room, which no one entered unless accompanied by him; but the reason of this precaution was unexplained to me, and I could only guess at it.

At last an ardent curiosity got the better of me and I said to him one morning:

"Do you remember what you spoke of in New York—your important discovery? You did not promise to tell me your secret, but, to be frank, I would like very much to hear about it."

He looked at me absently, and said:

"My discovery? Yes, I remember, and I am about to test it. Come to the laboratory to-night and we will speak of it."

* * * * *

At a late hour on the same night I was seated with Dr. Magnus in his laboratory. He seemed greatly depressed. The habitual expression of his face was one of philosophic calmness. Now something evidently troubled him, and he was ill at ease.

"You are unwell," I said: "you have lost all your cheerfulness at least. What is the matter, friend?"

He looked at me with a vague expression, hesitated, and then replied:

"I am not unwell. The trouble you notice is occasioned by a presentiment."

"A presentiment?"

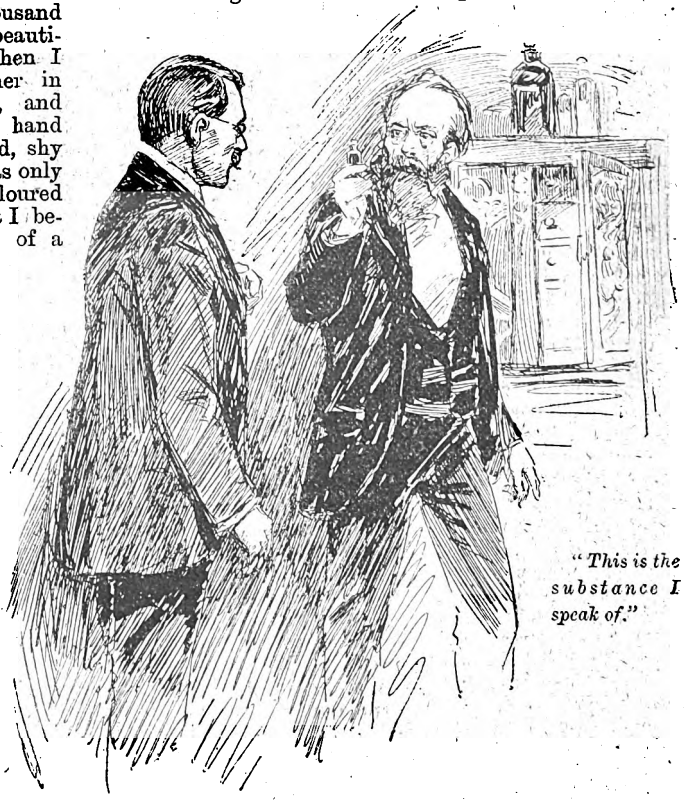
"What day of the month is it?" he asked.

"The 11th," I said with surprise.

"Well, the 13th of October will be a bad day for me."

"A bad day?"

"Something sinister will occur upon it."



"This is the substance I speak of."

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I looked at him with the utmost astonishment.

"You are surprised?"

He spoke in the calmest tone, and was evidently convinced of what he said. What was I to reply? That he was a mere visionary? That seemed unnecessary, and I changed the conversation. I spoke of the discovery he alluded to when we conversed in New York.

"It is simple, as all wonderful things are," he said. "I have discovered—almost by accident—a combination of the simplest substances which produce an element of destruction of the most fearful character."

Doctor Magnus rose, went to the cabinet, and, opening the door with a key which he kept upon his person, brought back a vial containing less than an ounce of what appeared to be a white powder.

"This is the substance I speak of—no, it would be better not to intrust it to you, though, so far as I am aware, there would be no danger from the concussion if you were to let the vial fall. All the properties of the substance are not known to me, however."

"Then your discovery is an explosive."

"Yes—but one of such enormous power that all others are nothing in comparison with it."

And, hastily restoring the vial to the cabinet, he led the way out of the laboratory, up a flight of stairs to the observatory, on the summit of the house.

Dr. Magnus looked at his watch.

"In two minutes you will see something," he said.

"Something?"

"Do you remember that I was absent yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Well, I had ridden into the mountain and descended into a cavern yonder beneath that peak. In one minute the mountain will be torn to pieces."

As he spoke an immense column of flame rose from the summit of the mountain, and a roar like thunder rolled through the gorges.

"What does this mean?" I exclaimed.

"I mean that an ounce of white powder buried a thousand feet, and, connected with an electric clock, has lifted a million cubic yards of earth and granite."

He spoke quietly, but added suddenly in a low and awe-struck tone:

"Do you see?"

"See what?"

"The smoke! the smoke! It is like a girl kneeling and praying!"

I looked, and must say that what I saw excited my astonishment. The white smoke from the explosion has risen to an immense height, and has assumed the exact form of a girl upon her knees, looking up with clasped hands, and apparently praying.

"It is like Frederica," whispered Dr. Magnus.

* * * * *

The next day was the 12th of October, and I shall always remember it and the day that followed.

In company with Dr. Magnus I rode to the scene of explosion. The mountain was torn asunder from base to summit, and was an immense ruin. It was no longer possible to doubt the fearful character of his discovery.

An hour afterwards I was walking with Frederica.

We rode slowly back, and I recall the solemn and mournful tones of his voice.

"These terrible forces of Nature," he said, "profoundly sadden me, for I feel my insignificance. What is the poor pigmy man in presence of them? They sport with him."

"Your pigmy is the master, since he controls them," I replied.

"And the Providence you talk of is the master of both, I suppose," replied Dr. Magnus.

He spoke in a gloomy tone, and added:

"I have tried to believe in your Providence and cannot."

"And yet you believe in astrology—in signs in the heavens—why not in that behind them?"

"Signs in the heavens," he repeated in a low voice. "Did you observe that cloud of smoke last night."

"In the shape of a woman praying? Yes, and it certainly was remarkable."

"But the resemblance."

We looked at the end of the avenue leading to the house.

"Look," he said, touching my arm and speaking almost in a whisper.

I looked, and I confess I was startled. What I saw was the figure of Frederica, clad in a white dress, and kneeling on the grass. She had gathered some wild flowers, and as she knelt, holding up both hands and arranging the flowers, her figure exactly resembled the

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strange shape assumed by the smoke, to which Dr. Magnus had called my attention on the preceding night.

An hour afterwards I was walking with Frederica on the banks of the island, and this long interview changed the whole aspect of my life.

I knew what I had not dared to hope—that the beautiful girl returned my own affection; that she had seen how much I loved her, and had gradually come to love me in return: and at twilight, when we went back slowly, I held clasped in my own hand the hand of the woman who had promised that she would be my wife.

Frederica had made but one request—that I would defer my interview with her father. He was subject to fits of melancholy, and of late had been very much depressed. Would I please not speak to him of our engagement, at least not during the next day? She had a reason for this request which she would afterwards explain to me.

Her words had produced a singular impression on me. Did she share her father's belief that something would occur on the 13th of October? I dared not ask her, and simply said that I would obey her wishes.

I passed the evening with Frederica in the drawing-room, and she retired about eleven. I then went into the library, and found Dr. Magnus engaged in writing.

As I entered he turned his head, and I said:

"I am afraid I disturb you."

"Not at all; I am only writing my will," he replied.

"Your will?"

"To-morrow is the 13th of October, and, as something may happen, I am preparing for it."

With these words he went on writing, and I soon afterwards left him.

* * * * *

The morning of the 13th of October duly came, and I am obliged to confess, in spite of my profound incredulity, I experienced a vague emotion. There is something in earnest conviction which affects the most sceptical; and, though I felt that the apprehensions of Dr. Magnus were visionary, his words had left on me an indefinable impression of uneasiness.

It seemed absurd, however, to connect anything sinister with such a day. The sun had risen without a cloud, and all around was bright and cheerful. The sky was blue, and the robins were chirping; a light breeze laughed in the leaves.

Dr. Magnus retained his depression, though I could see that he made a resolute effort to conceal it from Frederica. In this he appeared to have succeeded. She was radiant, and after breakfast said that she had planned a little excursion. Would we accompany her?—she would promise to make herself agreeable.

"Let us wait," cried Frederica, throwing her arms round him.

I looked at her smiling face, and felt that under her gaiety there was some earnest purpose. What it was I was unable to divine, but I found it impossible to rid myself of the impression.

Dr. Magnus at first demurred to joining the proposed excursion — he would be occupied all the day, he said, in his laboratory. But Frederica renewed her entreaties—declared that the day was much too beautiful to be passed in the house—and the result was that he consented to accompany us.

An hour afterwards the carriage appeared; we entered, and crossed the ford; and then the driver, by direction of Frederica, proceeded due west towards the mountains.

I recall every trifle connected with this day, and especially the exhibition of nervous terror on the part of Dr. Magnus. In a man of his resolute character, his proceedings were unaccountable. He kept his eyes fixed upon Frederica, and seemed to find in every trifle something disquieting.

An hour's drive through a lovely country brought us to a point where the road ascended the mountain, and the carriage proceeded slowly up the steep acclivity. At last it entered a body of pines, emerging from them a few minutes afterwards, and I saw before me what took me suddenly back to Switzerland.

It was a little Swiss *chalet* perched upon a shoulder of the mountain and commanding a view of the entire country for many miles. A winding path led to the door, and we ascended it and entered the chalet. Here a new surprise awaited me.

The interior of the rough building was the picture of elegance. The cottage furniture was in exquisite taste, bright rugs lay on the polished floors, wicker chairs held out arms of welcome, and we were met by the

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smiling faces of the servants from the island, sent in advance by Frederica to prepare for our reception.

A few words explained this marvel. Dr. Magnus had purchased an estate on the slope of the mountain for grazing cattle, and built the chalet as a souvenir of his travels in Switzerland. He had intended it for his herdsman, but Frederica had taken a fancy to it, had proceeded to furnish it as a summer villa, and had ended by declaring that the air of the mountain was far better for her than the humid atmosphere of the island.

As the hours passed on, the laughter of Frederica gradually dissipated my impressions of the morning, and I think they would have disappeared but for a circumstance for which I could not account. Looking attentively at her, I became convinced that her gaiety was assumed. She was evidently acting a part, and seemed to be straining every nerve to retain her father at the *châlet* until night.

Dr. Magnus was gloomy and agitated. Sunset was near now, but the sun was obscured, and he could only tell the time by his watch, at which he repeatedly looked. A storm was coming, and if we proposed to return it was plainly time to do so. An immense black pall swept over the mountains, extending above the amphitheatre, and flashes of lightning, followed by sullen thunder, lit up the wild landscape.

What followed will never be effaced from my memory.

We were standing at the door of the *châlet*, watching the storm, which was sweeping eastward, when a small clock on the wall of the sitting-room struck the hour.

"The danger is over. Let us return," Dr. Magnus suddenly exclaimed.

"Oh, no, let us wait," cried Frederica, throwing her arms round him.

"But there is no one at the island."

"Oh, I beg of you."

And, falling upon her knees, Frederica sobbed and clasped her hands. For the second time I saw the resemblance to the figure in the smoke.

"The day has ended. There is no more danger," cried Dr. Magnus, clasping her in his arms.

"The clock is too fast," I heard Frederica whisper.

As she spoke a sudden glare reddened the sky, and the ground shook. A roar came from the direction of the island, and I saw what I shall never forget. A flash of lightning had struck the house—no doubt ignited the substance in the cabinet—and the great mansion resembled the crater of a raging volcano.

The 13th of October had had its sinister event after all, and the great discovery had wreaked its vengence on its author.

J. E. COOKE.

A LOVER'S LETTERS.

Translated from the Dutch of "Holda."

THERE lay the letters on the table in front of her—love letters, each of which had made her heart leap with joy when she had received it. Many times since that day when he had passed out of her life she had taken the packet out of the drawer, intending to read them through for the last time and then destroy them as she had destroyed or removed everything else which could remind her of her folly.

But each time her heart had failed her at the sight of the familiar handwriting, and, with scalding tears trickling down her cheeks, she had thrust the packet back into the drawer. Oh, the misery of it! Why had she trifled with the man she had loved? *Had* loved? Nay, the man she loved still, passionately, but who was lost to her for ever.

But she had done it at last; she had read them, in consecutive order, from date to signature. The first—how well she remembered it—written in a shaky hand, indicative of deep emotion, was a frank but timid declaration of love; the last, a bitterly formal letter of farewell.

The task was over; a task which had caused her the sharpest pain mingled with that strange sensation of pleasure which we all experience in recalling the past with its sorrows and joys. It only remained to destroy them and turn her back resolutely on all that had gone before. She gave one last look at the small heap of paper and then took it up in both hands and dropped it on the fire.

She watched the tongues of flame slowly wind round and among the paper, destroying for ever the words of love which a man had poured out from the depths of his soul. How slowly they burned! She took up the poker and stirred them, and as the flames leapt up it was as though a knife had pierced her heart. The sheets of paper crackled, and curled up like human beings in agony; and as she stared at them with fixed gaze, she could now and then see some loving word which *he* had written.

Oh, God! It was too hard to bear! Would they never burn? With a low laugh that had no sense in it, she again thrust the paper between the bars.

Up leapt the flames, swallowing the letters that had brought such joy to her and had been kissed again and again. She could not bear it. A cry of pain, a moan rather, such as makes one fear for the mental equilibrium of the being who utters it, came from her as she sank upon a chair.

At last it was finished. She stood up, trembling, with a feeling at her heart as though she had crushed the life out of a human creature. As she turned, her eyes fell upon a charred piece of paper which had been jerked out of the grate when she had plunged the poker into the burning mass. Scarcely knowing what she did, she picked it up and read these words:

"My own darling."

She let it drop, pressed both hands to her heart, and fell to the ground unconscious.

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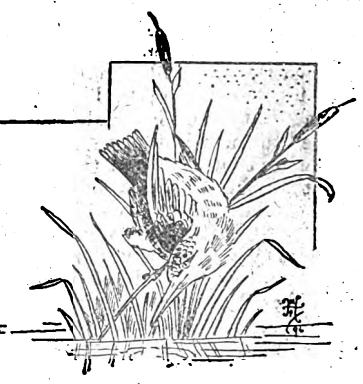
THE BUNCH OF VIOLETS.



Above the din of conflicting voices, sharp, insistent—for the discussion between these men, perfunctory at first, had grown passionate and acrid—Ayessa's voice broke at last like a bell:

"You talk and talk—of love! How you talk of it! In every key, on every note; and yet not one of you—not one—knows what love is."

She lay, half-reclining, on the cushioned divan, like a Sultana among her slaves. And she was, as some Sultana, powerful. All the great city that year crouched at her feet. That arched gipsy foot of hers was on its neck.

Royalty sat in the great box, with the crimson and gold draperies, night upon night. Reared in a strolling player's tent—born no one knew where—perhaps in purple and fine linen—who might tell?—perhaps in rags—this breaker of wild horses, this bareback circus rider, wielded a might in this hour of her triumphs as ever jewelled sceptre did.

As a chorus of voices protested she rose, suddenly shaking off her languor, beginning to pace the floor, half-oblivious of them all, her long interlaced fingers quivering a little, her great eyes darting jets of sombre fire, an ironical smile just touching the curves of her disdainful lips.

"I speak what I know," she continued. "I speak the truth. How many of you here profess to love me? Profess to be consumed with passion so great that all the waters of the Polar Seas could not quench their flame?" Her glance swept faces blushing, and faces pale with emotion, and the smile on her lips deepened. "Who would answer?" she cried, "if I asked which of you all would be ready to die for me to-night?"

There were men of all ages in that room, men of all temperaments. Yet all answered "I." But the smile on the lips of the girl deepened the more.

Every man had answered but one. That one remained silent. But when the others had gone, he still lingered.

"And so, Decroix," said Ayessa, and her teeth gleamed like pearls in the ripe pomegranate bloom of her mouth, "you would not be ready to die for me to-night?"

When Decroix answered, his voice was hoarse and muffled, a dangerous look was in his eyes.

"Did you suppose I would join the chorus of all these fools and knaves? Do you count upon throwing me in with the mass of your adorers—the crowd that philanders about your footsteps day and night? I did not reply to your challenge—no! But if you ask me whether I would die for you to-night——"

The sentence broke unfinished between his teeth. He touched with trembling fingers the yellow-coloured rose languishing on her breast.

"Throw that into a pit of fire, and ask me to bring it up from the depths again!"

She took the rose from her breast and let it drop at her feet. She turned from him and laughed a little. She stood opposite a long mirror, and in it she saw a reflection of herself.

"See!" She crossed her arms and from under her lowered brows her great eyes fastened themselves on the reflected image. "That is what you love with so mad a passion. You, in one degree; all those other men in a hundred others. These eyes, these hands, these lips, this throat. This skin, because it is softer than that of some other woman; this hair, because it is longer, silkier, more abundant. Let us lose all this to-morrow, and where would your vaunted admiration be? Do you love the soul beneath all this?"

Her voice had changed to a new key. There had come a strange tremour to the full lips:

"Do you care for the immortal spirit that gives life, breath to all this clay, whose chance perfection so influences your imagination?" She broke into a shrill little laugh. "But perhaps you think that a gipsy circus rider, a girl who shows herself in silk tights every night on a bareback Arab horse can have no immortal soul?"

Decroix stood frowning, gazing at her half bewildered, gnawing his moustache.

"You try me far," he muttered. "If you were transformed, through some fatal blight, into a thing hideous—to-morrow—this very night—still I should love you!"

But Ayessa looked at him and smiled.

"No, you would not," she said softly. "You would not, my friend. You think so, perhaps. But you would not."

"I swear to you——"

But already his insistence had begun to gall upon her. She turned, with a faint line of fatigue on her lips, and murmured:

"Useless. All you could say would not change my conviction. It is instinctive, and instinct never leads astray."

Over the fire of the Eastern face a veil of thought had dropped that night. The eyes were shadowed, introspective. Scarcely a ripple softened the set, disdainful expression of the mouth under the wild plaudits of the great ring. And Ayessa rode as she had never ridden before—with a dash that was almost reck-

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less, with an abandon that was almost desperate, with a well-nigh insolent disregard of consequences. The boxes rose at her. The plaudits turned into long shouts of mad approval. Such feats as no woman had ever performed before Ayessa performed that night, as in a half-conscious state, easily, carelessly, as a child tosses an iridescent soap-bubble into the air.

Panting a little she stood now in the sawdust pathway that led from the ring to her dressing-room. The black Arab horse had been led slowly past her by a supernumerary; another man followed, carrying the flowers, the baskets, the crowns.

"Ah, you Decroix?" said Ayessa indifferently, her glance resting on the young man who had made his way in. He stood near her dressing-room door, devouring her with his sullen eyes.

"You know that it is against the rules for you to be here?" she pursued, shrugging her shoulders. She was about to pass him without another word. But her glance beyond him had discerned another face. A face pale, a little emaciated, with deep-set eyes, which she had seen many times before, but only recently had begun to observe.

This man did not belong to her train. He was a young poet and journalist, poor, struggling; an enthusiast aflame with those dreams that visit chosen souls in the first wildly sweet years of youth alone, with no fortune but his genius, such as he had, nothing to offer the beautiful gipsy, to Ayessa, the unknown Bohemian circus-rider, who reigned like a queen and wore jewels that would have ransomed a crown.

But now their eyes met, and Ayessa paused. In the young man's fingers drooped a little knot of purple violets.

"For me?" she said softly, and she extended her hand. The tips of those velvet fingers touched his for an instant, and a quiver ran like flame through his veins. His pale cheek grew a little paler, and Ayessa smiled. The crowns, the great clusters of rare exotics lay tossed in careless heaps, unglanced at, in her dressing-room, but when Ayessa came out into the sawdust ring again the little bunch of purple violets drooped against her heart.

Why had she placed it there? She could scarce herself have told, perhaps.

This man had never sought to approach her. He had always stood afar, on the outskirts of the retinue of men of fashion that surrounded her. Only a swift, intenser pallor where her glance had intercepted his had told his secret. Or had there been no secret to tell?

Breathless the row upon row of intent faces watched the last feats of the bareback rider for that night. The most wonderful had been reserved for that moment. And Ayessa rode again as she had ridden all that evening—as if half-unconscious of herself, of the hundreds of spectators, the almost superhuman difficulty, involving intense physical fatigue in every movement. Even the black Arab horse appeared, magnetically, to have caught some of this spirit. The people rose in their seats and cheered wildly. Then through the cheers there broke suddenly the frightened cry of a woman.

How had it happened? No one exactly knew. A hair's-breadth swerving of the horse, an infinitesimal deviation on the part of the rider, an instant's loss of balance, and Ayessa lay prone in the sawdust. It was all over in a moment. They gathered up the unconscious form. The Arab horse had stopped, quivering in every limb. They bore Ayessa swiftly out of sight, and six Japanese trapeze performers hurried in to take her place.

The evening's programme went on to its close. The excitement in the audience subsided. The idol of the hour was not forgotten; but there was a belief that she could have sustained no serious injury. A slight shock, a few moments of unconsciousness, and to-morrow night she would delight their eyes again as before.

But those who left the great building by the players' exit an hour later knew otherwise; knew that never again would Ayessa hold hundreds of eyes spellbound upon her every motion; that never again would she be the power, the fever, the queen that she had been. In a moment, in the drawing of a breath, she had been hurled from the highest pinnacle of her triumph into the shadows of a blasted life.

"For," said one of her obscurer companions of the ring as she hurried home with her lover, a juggler with knives, "what'll Ayessa ever be good for now, with one arm broken and one ankle so shattered that both those doctors they called in said she must have a limp for life. Beside, that cut across her cheek from the horse's hoof will leave a scar that'll disfigure her till the day of her death. So good-bye to all this famous beauty!" And the girl laughed a little.

She was not more ill-natured than many another of her kind. But she had some share of comeliness herself, and where Ayessa was no other beauty had ever been remarked.

* * * * *

On the outskirts of the great city stand some scattered rows of white cottages framed in verdure. No echoes from the clamour of the paved streets reaches this retreat. The restless fever of the city's life dies out in quietude.

From out of the door of one of these cottages a young man has just come, walking slowly with head sunk a little, gnawing his moustache, so lost in thought that he passes without seeing or recognising him, another man just about to enter. But the latter has both seen and recognised Decroix.

A moment later he stands in the darkened room, where, on a low lounge, lies Ayessa.

"Decroix has just been here."

Ayessa slowly raises her eyes, and through the gloom, his own eyes becoming accustomed to the muffled light after the glare of outside, the new-comer sees her smile.

"Yes. He thought he really loved me, poor fellow—loved me in spite of all the accounts of my disfigurement. But I knew better. And when he insisted on coming here I raised the curtain from that window. Then he realised the change. I am not a monster, after all, but I am no longer the beautiful Ayessa! And Decroix—Decroix, after a few stammered phrases—left me."

She speaks calmly, softly, still with the inscrutable smile on her lips.

But the man before her watches her with unwavering eyes. He is very pale. Suddenly he takes his hand from his breast. In his fingers is a little bunch of violets.

"Once before I offered you violets and you wore them on your heart. Will you take these now, and with them my life?"

Slowly her hand is outstretched for the odorous blossoms. Her steady glance questions his. He slowly bends his knee.

"Whatever other men have done, I have loved you!" he says.

She looks an instant into his impassioned poet's eyes.

"I know it. I think I knew it from the first," she softly murmurs in reply. F. R. Rogers.

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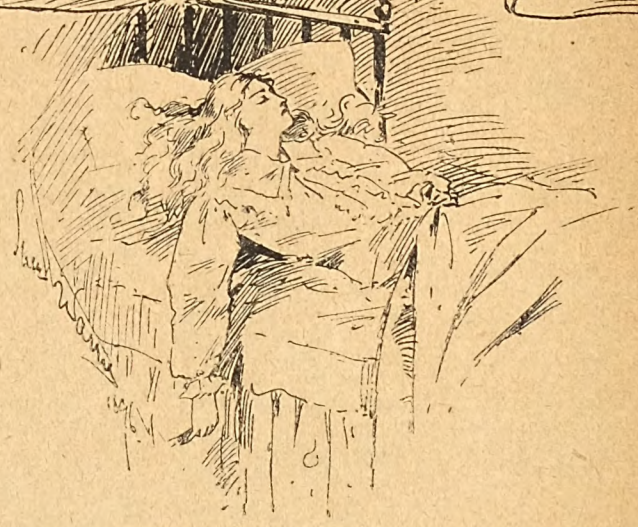
WAS IT FATAL?



I was on a visit for a few days to a married schoolmate. This, my first evening there, was stiflingly hot and I slipped out for a breath of air, leaving my friend busy with some housewifely duty.

I went as far as the gate and leant over it, musing on the difference between her life, so full of loving interests, and my, as yet, solitary one. As I meditated, half enviously, a flash of lightning, harbinger of the much needed shower, brightened the road before me and illumined the path, dark with overhanging trees, on the opposite side. It disclosed to my view the slouching form of a man slowly moving along and with his face turned directly towards me. I shivered slightly with fear—yes, it was fear, though I was ashamed of it a moment afterwards. A man returning from work, I thought; and yet, why did he not look straight ahead instead of towards this house, unless he was attracted by the cheerfully lighted windows?

I felt strangely uneasy and peered into the darkness, vainly endeavouring to see if he were still there. No more friendly flashes came, and as the rain began to patter down, I was fain to return unsatisfied to the house.

Why was I suspicious?

I did not know. It was not that the man's face frightened me, for the glimpse had been so momentary that if the countenance were evil, or that of the most benign philanthropist, I could not tell.

I wanted to ask my friend if there had been any burglaries in the village of late; but I feared to needlessly alarm her, and so refrained from mentioning the incident; but while I conversed on ordinary topics, the form of that man persistently recurred to my mental vision.

I did so far forget my intention as to say to Mr. Adams, my friend's husband: "Have you any firearms in the house?" To which he replied that he always kept a revolver under his pillow. "A very excellent precaution," I exclaimed with relief. And the matter dropped; but afterwards the thought came to my mind that while the revolver might be a good means of defence to him and his wife upstairs, it would scarcely benefit me, who slept in the little spare room downstairs.

The windows of this room, I tremblingly remembered, were easily accessible from the piazza which extended round that side of the house, and the fastenings on the shutters and sashes were very frail little arrangements.

I did not believe in presentiments, but wondered how and why this burglar question, a thing which had never troubled me before, should haunt me so.

Still pondering the matter, I followed my friend into the kitchen, where she wanted to get a pitcher of water. On the table lay a knife that had been worn and ground away till the top was a sharp point. She often used it for peeling vegetables, and that it had a keen edge I knew, for I had helped her that day.

As she turned for the water I quickly picked up the knife, and slipped it up my sleeve, urged to do so by the instinct of self-defence, not of any kleptomaniacal tendencies.

I flushed guiltily when my friend faced me, for I was unaccustomed to any underhand or undersleeve movements, and fancied she must know I had done something sly. However, she did not suspect anything, and a few minutes after went as far as the door of my room with me, kissed me good-night and retired.

Under my pillow I slipped the knife I meant should act as my protector. Then, smiling at my cowardice, I dismissed the subject from my mind, leisurely undressed, and was soon fast asleep.

How long I slept I do not know, but a ray of light fell across my eyelids, and in an instant I was wide awake. I did not move a muscle, but all my previous fears rushed across me.

The light from a burglar's lantern, reasoned my fright. A faint flash of lightning, whispered my cooler sense. Nervously alert, I listened. A slight rustling and rattling fell on my ear. Someone was at the window near the head of my bed, of that I was certain. Without moving my head, I turned my eyes round till I got a view of the window, then saw, with horror, that it was

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being slowly raised. By some diabolical means, the fellow must have broken or loosened the fastenings.

I was frozen with terror. In a few seconds the opening would be wide enough to admit the ruffian. I dare not scream; for before help could come, even supposing that my cry should awaken those above me, the brute would have time to silence me, perhaps for ever.

Then I remembered the knife. A ray of hope filled my terrified heart.

I slipped my hand, oh, so stealthily and silently under my pillow, at the same time trying to maintain a regular breathing to indicate slumber.

Never did soldier clap his hand on his faithful sword with more implicit trust than I did the little bone handle of my humble blade.

None too soon did I grasp the weapon, for now appeared a big head covered with a thick shock of dark hair. Two glaring eyes rolled fiercely round. I closed my eyes a moment in terror, and remained rigid. Then I opened them slightly, and saw that, with his head and shoulders in the room, the man was leaning over the window-sill, and placing something—perhaps his lantern or tools—on the floor.

Now was my opportunity—my only one. The back of his neck gleamed bare before me. I set my teeth. Swift and silent as a panther about to spring, I rose to my knees, raised the knife above me, then—oh, horrible! —dashed it down with all the fierce, mad strength that possessed me, straight at that broad, bare nape.

It sunk in soft flesh a moment, then struck something hard. Oh, missed! A living human bone, I thought, as the blade swerved aside and sunk deeper. Then deadly terror, and a burning desire to undo my murderous act filled my soul. I tried to drag the knife from its bed of living flesh.

It snapped off, and with the handle still in my grasp, I fell back on the bed.

When next I opened my eyes, the bright sunlight was streaming in at the window, and the joyous twittering of birds fell upon my ear. I smiled at the sound, then shuddered as the memory of something flashed across me. What a dreadful dream, I thought, then sat up and rubbed my eyes.

Alas! no dream. Red drops of blood, now dry, dyed my hands and the sleeves of my nightgown. The handle of the broken knife lay on the counterpane, where it must have dropped from my hand as I fell back and lost consciousness.

Imagine the horrible amazement of my friends on hearing of my midnight encounter when they came to my room, for I was too weak to leave the bed that day. The grass without showed the footprints of two men. A trail of blood crimsoned the green for several yards, then ceased.

Mr. Adams placed the matter in the hands of the police, but no trace of the men has ever been found. I try to forget the deed; but at times in the night the thought haunts me—was it fatal? G. P. Willson.

RESULT OF THE - - - - - -

Picture Puzzle Competition.

THE PICTURE PUZZLE COMPETITION, particulars of which were published in the issue of *SHORT STORIES* dated January 25, has been an eminently successful one. Many thousands of persons entered for it, but, unfortunately, we underrated our readers' ingenuity in this matter, and did not make the task sufficiently difficult, for, of those attempts received on the first day, no fewer than 160 were correct. In order that there may be no disappointment among the correct competitors, we have decided to divide the £10 among them, with the result that each person whose name appears in the subjoined list receives 1s. 3d. The addresses may be seen at this office by anyone who may so desire.

Mrs. Wickers, Charles Harwood, Walter R. Eiden, A. Page, jun., Arthur Grigg, E. Britton, Harry Smith, J. P. Fitzgerald, Mrs. H. C. Batchelor, J. E. Smith, E. A. G. Howard, F. J. Gill, John Ness, William E. Hurst, Charles E. Wacogne, Miss Mary Belliss, R. H. Sentance, William Hurt, Herbert H. Jennings, Frederick Travers, Albert Vigor, Sydney Warr, Frederick Provis, F. E. Rennison. F. W. Comrie, Thomas Logan, J. Selby, A. E. Taylor, Don MacGillivray, W. Nicholson, W. H. Braw, Mrs. Day, W. Hull, C. Young, E. Bierman, W. E. Tanner, C. Phillips, J. W. Lavender, F. Napoli, Miss M. Benson, W. Martin, C. Bearman, Louisa Bastin, Mrs. S. A. Howe, W. Hood, P. H. Orme, G. Baker, A. H. Huss, W. Martinnant, H. Williams, F. Jarvis, J. Lamberton, P. A. Watts, W. S. Parry, J. A. Thornton, N. De Courcy, T. Seddon, C. H. Godden, T. H. Smith, J. McGowan, E. R. Cartwright, T. Albion, J. W. Rayner, E. Holmes. P. C. A. Cotton, F. T. Vine, W. Andrews, H. Lacey, J. A. Bates, S. Roe, Frank Harcourt, H. F. Wootton, Mrs. C. Ward, Martha Johnson, F. Cookson, James O'Brien, Oscar J. Carlisle, W. J. Brown, J. A. Raven, Mrs. A. Beresford, W. H. Goodwin, Lilian Cooper, R. J. A. Bennett, E. E. Du Soir, E. Johnstone, W. G. Sanders, G. S. Syndercombe, J. Doman Turner, H. H. Parry, Mary Rex, A. J. Collick, W. Bennett, R. T. Wall, A. E. Roby, T. Draper, Miss K. Webster, A. Raynham, C. J. Wright, A. Ramell, W. T. Tigg, L. Wiles, G. Shore, W. Walter, Mrs. A. J. Clark, A. C. Crumpler, K. Nelson, F. C. Long, A. B. Du Soir, W. H. Clark, H. Wilson, G. A. Parker, O. E. G. Allsup, G. S. Riche s, jun., H. Picton, Mrs. Wilkinson, T. P. Hiorus, B. S. Barber, F. G. Callcott, E. A. Page, Mrs. Woollett, Leo Hicks, L. H. Good, A. Clegg, A. W. Boothby, W. F. M. Hunter, Mrs. Cartwright, Miss M. J. Bailden, Mrs. A. Edkins, F. H. Hemming, S. Frames, H. Willmott, R. P. Wall, B. Herring, G. J. Lodge, T. Dittmar, E. Stones, A. W. Rowe, C. J. H. Dunning, K. Black, A. Skeats, G. Waller, C. E. Oliver, A. Raymond, E. C. Webb, C. E. Ayland, R. Bathurst, J. Brawmuller, W. Wilmore, Mrs. Wesley, C. Morris, jun., H. J. Gable, Ethel F. Jach, J. H. Hack, S. N. Crowle, R.N., Mrs. A. F. Moncrieff, H. A. Molt, Miss Arch, T. H. Helsdon, E. Smith, A. Lowe, and L. Jezzi.

Next week we shall have something to say about Consolation Prizes.

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The GIRL with the CAT EYES.

One day when the stage arrived at Big Flats a very handsome, well-dressed, athletic-looking young man alighted and took the trail for Shady Canyon. Turning the corner of a huge granite column, out of whose perpendicular-split centre grew a stunted pine, he stopped short and laughed outright at the kittenish antics of a small girl playing alone by the trail.

The girl stopped her play and stood before him with hands down and clasped, looking straight into his face, not boldly nor yet bashfully, but with a sort of wonderment of expression. She was a very small creature, and as to age, might have been anywhere from twelve to sixteen. Her hair, which was a peculiar yellow, was cut close to her head.

The young man started slightly when he met the full gaze of the strange, yellow eyes. "Cat eyes" was his first thought. A repelling fascination crept over him as the impression deepened in his mind that there was an indescribable feline expression all over the child. So swiftly do one's thoughts take shape, before he could bring his lips to form a question, the ridiculous idea had come and gone that should he turn away from the moveless stars of those curious yellow eyes, the small creature would spring upon his shoulders a ferociously wild cat.

"My little girl, can you tell me how far it is to Shady Canyon?"

She bobbed her head over one shoulder, thus indicating both distance and direction.

"See it?"

He flushed slightly at the nearness to the town, or maybe at the implication conveyed in the tone and the gesture.

"Nobody ever said that to me since he died."

"Said what?"

"My little girl."

"What is your name?"

"It's Cat Eyes since he died."

The creepy sensation again came over the young man when the child uttered the first thought which had come to him about her eyes. He conquered the feeling, and asked her very kindly: "How long has it been since he died?"

"It's been a hundred years, I think. Anything in that," nodding to the bag which he carried, "that'd get out?" Assured that there was not, she continued in her quiet, quaint way, "Then I'll carry it up to the house for you, 'cause you called me what he used to."

He let her take it, and followed her up the trail just to see how the adventure would end. To him anything that promised a new sensation would surely be followed. He was only twenty-four, but he had been born rich artistically, intellectually, physiologically, and financially, and had been adventurously prodigal with all these gifts. A few steps below the trail one of some boys who were picking gum from a burnt pine log said to his companions, purposely loud enough for the girl to hear: "By Jehoshephat, it's Cat Eyes a-towing a greenhorn up to Mrs. Squeers."

She put down the bag, and turned upon them in a fury of rage and shame, but they had vanished in a chorus of laughter. The girl could not have told why she was ashamed, but ashamed she was. Cat Eyes belonged to Shady Canyon, but not a child in the village would play with her. They said they were afraid of her cat eyes, and that sparks would fly from her yellow hair. One boy declared that he had only given her hair the least little touch, and that she had turned into an angry yellow cat and scratched his face.

Three years before, on a chilly Sunday afternoon, she had been left crouching on her father's grave. Each kind-hearted woman thought, of course, that some other kind-hearted woman would care for her. And so it happened that Mrs. Squeers, returning from a walk in the woods, took the sobbing child to her saloon and gambling resort. The child's father had squandered many a gold piece in her place, and, when the child clung to her in her desolation, a feeling of protection sprang up in her heart.

Mrs. Squeers was an educated woman with much graciousness of manner. So she was popular with the men. Cat Eyes, therefore, in spite of her environments, received some advantages of speech and polish from the woman.

Cat Eyes led the young man into Mrs. Squeers' place. Vernon Allinson, which was the young man's name, did not stay, as Cat Eyes had hoped, but went to the little hotel, whose creaking signboard seemed always lamenting a better time.

Allinson's stay at Shady Canyon lengthened into months. He took Cat Eyes on long rambles up steep heights where they had to use their hands to help them up. On these long rambles their talks were grave and quiet, and on many subjects. She learnt much from him, and was an eager though unobtrusive listener.

One evening she was called into the saloon to recite. She had a marvellous voice, and it amazed the crowd. Barty Nesman in his enthusiasm attempted to kiss her, when Vernon struck him a blow on the face. There would have been bloodshed had not Mrs. Squeers inter-

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fered. Barty vowed that he would have revenge. At the same time Allinson peremptorily told Mrs. Squeers to send Cat Eyes out of the place and never have her in the saloon again. Frightened and stupid with amazement, she was sent to her room and never again recited in the saloon. But from that hour she was a self-abnegated slave to Allinson and was afraid that Barty would take vengeance upon him.

One crisp, cold morning in the late autumn she stood among the fading flowers and yellow leaves in the garden, with an ache of intuition in her heart. She had changed much in a few months—no longer a child, not yet a woman. Presently Allinson called to her, as he had done on other mornings. A dull red, painful to see, darkened her face.

He carried the bag which he had brought to the place. Silently, entirely subdued, she walked beside him down the canyon, and though he tried his best he could not get a word from her.

Just beyond the great boulder where he first met her he said good-bye. He made a pretty speech and gave her advice. She only gazed at him with a helpless, vacant stare, which so irritated him that he dropped her hand and walked away.

"Stupid creature," he said to himself. "I've wasted a summer trying to put a soul into this odd creature." While she in the dead leaves where he had left her standing, dropped to the earth, shaking from head to foot with tearless sobs. She bit the dry leaves and scratched her face with her hands, and there in the afternoon of the day Mrs. Squeers found her.

* * * * *

It was seven years since Vernon Allinson left the little girl, Cat Eyes, standing in the mountain path. He had just returned to San Francisco, and stood shaking hands with an acquaintance, a young man, much younger in years than he had knowledge of years.

"How long have you been in the city?"

"Landed at ten this morning."

"Straight from Paris?"

"In a roundabout way, straight from Paris."

"Then you have not seen the Tigress?"

"Nor heard of it. What is it?"

"It? Ha, ha, ha! It's at Maguire's, and it has set the town crazy in three nights."

"A woman I see," said Vernon indifferently.

"A woman you do not see," said the other, "or you would not speak so indifferently. Oh, Vernon, such a woman! A glittering, dazzling creature, whose acting and face are indescribable and incomparable. You have never seen anything like her, I know."

"Hard hit you are, my boy—very hard hit. You forget that I have dined on the theatre beauty of Paris, London, and Madrid. Do you think I'll be captivated by an amateur in your primitive metropolis at the Golden Gate?"

"You may laugh at me, but you will not laugh after you have seen her."

"Then, by all the saints, take me to her at once."

They were comfortably seated. A storm of applause announced the appearance of the *débutante*. "A glittering, dazzling creature, incomparable and indescribable." He kept repeating the spirit of his friend's words, and from that moment his eyes never left her while she was in sight of them. "Tigress? Tigress? Why the Tigress?" he thought, then felt the appropriateness of the title.

Only a tigress with the freedom of the jungle in its limbs could have such a superb grace of movement and perfection of contour. And such eyes, what were they? They were mirrors of topaz reflecting the gaslight. And her hair, what a glorious crown it was! He thought it richer amber in the shadows, and spun sunshine when the lights fell upon it. And yet it was the impression rather than the appearance that made him repeat again and again: "Tigress, my beautiful Tigress," so quick are we to lay claim to what pleases us.

In the middle of the play he took the diamond pin from his cravat and the *boutonnière* from his coat, and thrust the improvished bouquet at her feet. She saw the gleam of light coming, and the hand which had thrown it, and flashed her wonderful eyes on his face. She picked up the *boutonnière*, pinned it carelessly to her breast, then made an interpolation in the part she was playing, and sang:

Oh, do you remember the well-beaten trail
That led from the camp to the spring?
And the potpies we had from the squir'l and quail,
And the evenings when we used to sing?
The shady old camp is all gone to decay,
The ham-bone has dropped from the pin,
The roof and the door have both rotted away,
And the chimney is all tumbled in.

The glorious voice rose untrammelled. The warm, rich notes filled and thrilled the place. The words of the old song, sung at so many camp-fires, seemed to float and linger over the heads of the people. A large part of the audience were Californians of the old days, and the familiar tune, with its memories, made many a grizzled face wet with tears.

Vernon did not applaud. She had sung at him for him. This was the girl he had thought stupid in the mountain path, shaded with pines, seven years ago. Cat Eyes had grown to the subtle grace and charm of the tigress. He had been blind—so blind. Who had made this change? A fierce jealousy took possession of him. What man had taken up this beautiful creature? Allinson forget that he had dropped her with a few words of cold advice

"Take me to the stage to see her," he said to his companion.

"Take you to the moon!" he replied.

"Why not to the stage?"

"Why not to the moon? One is as accessible as the other to you."

"Where does she live?" asked Allinson.

"What?" asked the friend.

"The Tigress. Who else?"

"Don't know. It is said she does not receive callers, except those on business."

"Well, I'll find out."

And he did. The next morning at an early hour he handed his card to the Chinaman who opened the door, with the request to take it to the lady of the house.

"No, sabe," said the Chinaman. Vernon pointed to the card, then to his hand, then into the house.

"No, sabe."

"Let me brighten your understanding." And he handed him a piece of money. "Heap no, sabe," but there was a sly twinkle in the Chinaman's eye. Just then a young woman came to the door and invited him in. With his pulses on fire he waited to see if she would come. Then there was a sliding of folding doors, the heavy curtains were pushed apart, and the Tigress, in all her royal, graceful loveliness, stepped into the room. Vernon rose eagerly to meet her. She held his card in one hand and extended the other and prosaically said: "Mr. Allinson, I am pleased to meet you."

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This cold, beautiful woman, whose name he did not know, had evidently no prior knowledge of him.

"Cat Eyes, it is not fair." These were not the words he intended to say. It was what he called her in Shady Canyon. He said it now with so much of the plaintive and petulant in his tone that Cat Eyes laughed. And such a laugh! Clear as the ring of a silver bell. A musical ripple of merriment. Then she shook hands with him again. The ice was suddenly melted.

They sat down facing each other, their knees nearly touching, so close were they. They lived over that summer in Shady Canyon.

"And do you remember," he said, "that I made you a wreath of manzanita berries and crowned you queen, you, my little Cat Eyes—Miss——. What is your name? Strange that I should have known you so long and not know your real name."

"An evidence that you have been very, very much interested in me."

"Remember I stayed three months longer in Shady Canyon because you were there."

"I remember."

"Then pity my embarrassment. You have outgrown Cat Eyes. Your friends call you——"

"The Tigress."

"Tigress be it then. My Tigress, my precious, royal, dangerous, jungle Tigress. My arms shall be your cage." He leant forward to clasp her in his arms. There was something in the laughter of her shining topaz eyes that stopped him.

"There are forty-nine other cages with the same placard on them all, ahead of yours."

"But I love you," he said.

"Same announcement that the other forty-nine make," as she glanced at him.

"But you loved me a little bit, did you not?"

"Maybe, but that was seven years ago. They say one changes utterly in seven years. And if Cat Eyes loved you, the love has evaporated, and been shorn from her head, and clipped from her nails, and rubbed off on towels. It is the Tigress now."

"You are cruel. You know I loved you so, seven years ago."

"You must have loved me. How you must have loved me then."

The yellow topaz eyes were laughing, the mouth was still smiling, but the words were cutting and ended in a moan like that of a wounded wild beast. All the days of her joyous childhood were crowded into it. The nails of her hand, which rested on the arm of the sofa, dug into the velvet till her wrist was raised from the cushions and the knuckles of her fingers looked white because of the tenseness of her skin.

He got up and sat down beside her, and took her hands. "I love you passionately now. My love is an avalanche broken from every restraint. I love you, Miss Tigress."

"Perhaps Mrs. Tigress. I wonder you are not afraid to hold a tigress's paws; you might get scratched."

"You've scratched my heart into shreds already. What a fool!—oh, what a fool I was not to know seven years ago that you loved me!" he said.

"And what a fool not to know it now!" There was bitterness—nay, almost contempt—in her voice, but the words were all-satisfying. He caught her to his breast and kissed her, and kissed her eyelids and forehead, cold hands and pale cheeks, amber hair and her wrists, and her sleeves, and tremulous mouth. Her head sank on his shoulder, her beautiful arms clasped round him, and a torrent of tears burst from her eyes, the first she had ever shed.

RICHARD SIBERT.

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The Story of a Shameful Crime.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Cancelled!

Mr. Detective Dean cashed the cheque that Richard Sheldon gave him the day succeeding that upon which he had apparently witnessed the death of Adrian Burgoyne or Robert Lane, convict 407.

So far excitement, the pursuit of a cherished object, had sustained him. For years, drawing a fair salary, he had dreamed of the day when a single "turn of luck," a substantial reward, would place him beyond want, and afford him the means of gratifying the one dominant ambition of his life—to become a landed proprietor.

Once the precious price of silence, honour, a wronged fellow-creature's innocence, reposed safely in his pocket, however, Mr. Detective Dean began to experience a sensation foreign to his nature for years.

He realised that the £2,000 was a bribe, hush-money practical black-mail. He comprehended that he was joining hands with a thorough scoundrel. He did not know all the details of the scheme of Richard Sheldon, but he could, without much difficulty, fit the disjointed pieces of the disordered enigma together, and form a pretty plausible theory that Sheldon was a scheming villain, and dead convict 407 his persecuted victim.

"He's dead—drowned, burned to a cinder," mused Dean. "All the vindication in the world would not help him now. I'm paid for my trouble. I've earned my reward—I'm going to enjoy it!"

But that was more easily said than done. In the rush and bustle of his active profession, hardened by daily contact with sordid, soulless criminals, Mr. Detective Dean had believed that emotion, sentiment, even conscience, were dead. Once out of the whirl, however, his mind began to prey upon itself. He was amazed to find his thoughts going back to the days when he sat at a loving mother's knee, and listened to the early precepts of wisdom and religion.

He began to see the face of the hunted convict in his dreams; he grew nervous, uneasy.

"You have failed in your duty—you have sold your soul for gold!" whispered regret.

"The man is dead. I could not prove his innocence, if I would," the worried heart cheated him into believing temporarily.

Somehow he did not feel right. What did his boasted record amount to? Shadowing a few law-breakers, dragging a dozen or two unfortunates to gaol! He could not recall a case where he had done a real bright, joy-giving deed. It was all gloomy justice, resentment, stern unwavering punishment. The record was all on the side of terror, gloom and darkness.

He began to evade his former associates. They regarded his sudden resignation from the force, his reported accession to a fortune left him by a favourite relative, suspiciously. He evaded them more than ever as he one day met Inspector Grey.

The latter was flushed, proud, buoyant, over the successful termination of a case, the first steps in which had been directed by Dean himself.

Persistent effort had resulted in the unmasking of a villain; the restoration to her family of a lovely girl; happiness, joy, justice—justice evolved from darkness, plotting and fraud. The papers rang with praises of Grey; the family he had reunited, idolised him. He had done a good deed, and, as a material benefit, a reward of £2,000 had been forced upon him.

With a bitter sigh at "the rare luck of other men," ex-Detective Dean left his jubilant friend, feeling the coward and craven more than ever.

"Bosh!" he ejaculated angrily, after a wretched, remorseful day. "Money is money—come easy, come hard, come rightfully, come wrongfully. I am not going to mope. The money was justly earned. I am not going to bother myself about a dead man's wrongs. It's the inactivity after active service that is preying upon my mind. Once I get at home among my pets, my beauties, the flowers, I'll feel all right; these dismal vagaries will cease to haunt me."

"All the same, you helped to drive convict 407 to his death!" rang out the disquieting voice of remorse.

Mr. Detective Dean purchased the rose garden in question—a pretty ten-acre plot, with a picturesque house, situated near Lynde, and within easy distance of the city.

A thrill of pride buoyed up his hopes and plans for the future, as he recorded the deed. Then he fell to wondering if that name, Berwyn Dean, would hold a place on the witness-book of eternity, when convict 407 summoned him before the last court of final inquiry, on the Day of Judgment; and he spent the rest of the day in wretched, sullen moping.

The garden was a beauty, its roses enough to set wild a less intense enthusiast. Ah! the fresh, crisp touch of the clear country air! the soft, intoxicating perfume of the velvet glories of pink and white!

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Yet, somehow, those zephyrs seemed to blow across a charnel-house of guilt within him, and he felt as if his breath would blight the pretty flowers. The man was becoming morbid, depressed, haunted.

He fought the grim phantoms his sensitive mind evoked with every subterfuge and system of fallacious reasoning he could conjure; but vainly. He had an inherent love of Nature, but that pure devotion to flowers could not exist, untainted, in company with the one crushing, ever-present reproach that he had sold his honour for gold, that he had hounded a possibly innocent man to his death.

So, leading an existence of indifferent comfort, ever restless, ever haunted, he tried to forget the canker of regret by looking into the golden, glowing hearts of the beautiful flowers about him.

One day—it was a week after the sending of the telegram to Richard Sheldon that announced the success of Colonel Lytle's mission in Mexico—the gardener came to where Dean was putting some plants in a remote corner of the garden to announce a visitor from the city.

"Who is it?" Dean questioned, irritated at an interruption, morbidly shrinking from meeting any one whose presence would revive memories of the past.

"Says his name is Grey."

"Oh, the inspector! I'll come—no, he doesn't need a formal welcome. Bring him here; I can't leave these slips, now I've started in on them."

He hurried his work, and completed the task just as a grim, erect figure shadowed the flower bed.

"Well, old partner!" spoke Grey cheerfully. "I find you at work?"

Dean tried to greet his old-time friend effusively. It was a failure; and the shrewd, suspicious eyes of the old police officer noted it to be so.

"Yes, inspector, but glad to see you. It's getting lonely here."

"See here, Dean!" smiled Grey, an unusual twinkle of self-satisfaction in his eye. "Inspector is a thing of the past."

"Eh?" ejaculated Dean with a start. "You don't mean to say that you've resigned?"

"Not much."

"But——"

"Salary doubled—month's holiday; so I thought I'd run down and see an old crony."

"Then you're promoted?"

"My last case brought me advancement, yes. They've made me Superintendent."

Dean's face fell. Superintendent! What he had lost! Ah! the man before him could crush and hound and punish, but only when duty dictated. *He* had not sold his soul for a bribe!

Dean listened dismally, shrinking within his unworthy self, as Grey chatted on animatedly. He felt like a lost angel, shut out of paradise.

"Enough of me!" cried Grey finally. "I came to see you. And those wonderful roses? Come, rouse up, Dean! You appear half dead. Rural felicity ain't doing much for you, it seems to me. Show me the grounds."

Dean tried to be more cordial and energetic. He took the chief through the garden. He showed him roses enough to garland a palace.

He rattled over the bewildering varieties. Here were the glowing Jacqueminots, there the stately Cloth of Gold—pink, white, amber, crimson, single, double; tiny as a posey, mammoth as a sunflower! A veritable garden of beauty! The old police officer enjoyed the tramp mightily, and then, as they reached the end of the garden, and came to a broken high fence, he began carefully reading the inscriptions that were written on the little wooden tags attached to each bush, indicating its age, variety, and pedigree.

"Moss-rose, crossed with yellow common," droned Grey.

"Quite a complicated business! What's that? Some new plant, not yet sprouted?"

The spot where the two men had halted was the identical copse that had harboured Adrian Burgoyne a few weeks previous.

As the old inspector spoke he curiously indicated a little mound of earth, with a tag, somewhat larger than those used on the rose-bushes, sticking up at its head.

"Eh?" muttered Dean, staring. "That? No, I've planted nothing there that I know of."

"There's a wooden tag."

"Yes, and—why! it's got writing on it. Maybe the gardener—Mercy!"

Dean had carelessly picked up the piece of wood.

The mock tombstone, the fanciful epitaph that Adrian Burgoyne had written nearly two months ago, at that self-same spot, looked up at the detective with sentient power of overwhelming speech and accusation.

Wild-eyed, he perused it; with trembling hands, he thrust it into his bosom. His companion stared at him as if he was mad, for, with a vehemence that was almost frantic, Dean dragged him from the spot, as if it was haunted.

He tried to be jovial, cordial. He invited his friend to remain a week, a month, as his guest. In the light of that bloodless face, those hollow eyes, the chief of police politely dissented. He had to be on the move; he must catch the next train. Sorry, but he would come again; and he left the place with a serious, wondering face, trying to analyse the strange incoherent actions of Mr. Detective Dean.

Once alone, with feverish wildness Dean tore the wooden tombstone from his bosom, where he had hidden it, as if it was a burning brand.

Once again, with distended eyes and ashen face, he perused the mystifying chronicle.

It bore a date—a date four days later than the day upon which convict 407 had seemingly met his death—and it read.

"*Sacred to the memory of Convict 407—Adrian Burgoyne. Died——*" and the date followed. "*Murdered by the law. Resurgam!*"

What did it mean? Written after Burgoyne's death! What did it mean? The handwriting was his, indubitably!

"Murdered by the law!" Over and over, and over again, the haunting words ran riot through the fevered brain of the half-mad detective.

"Murdered by the law!" As dusk came on he seemed to see those words written in scroll, like characters of fire, in the air, on the walls, among the bushes.

Was he going mad? No. The chronicle was plain, terse. His trained mind traced cause and effect. He could yet reason.

At midnight a lone, forlorn figure stole from the garden and made for the railway station at Lynde.

At earliest dawn Mr. Detective Dean knocked at the door of the house in the city where lived the man from whom he had purchased the rose villa.

The latter regarded his white, anguished face, wonderingly.

"You look troubled, Mr. Dean," he began sympathetically, when the other waved him to silence with an imperious gesture of his hand.

"No nonsense!" he grated hoarsely. "You told me the day I bought the villa that I had just anticipated another customer?"

"Yes."

"It was true?"

"I am not given to lying!" bluntly and indignantly came the response.

"He offered more money?"

"Yes."

"He wants it now?"

"Badly. He would raise his offer, I think."

"Take it! Give me your cheque for what I paid you, now, at once—the bare amount I paid you—and make what you can of it."

"Why! Mr. Dean——"

"Take it or leave it—no trifling!" cried Dean, almost fiercely. "I need the money—at once!"

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"I will accept. Make out your deed!"

10 o'clock—Detective Dean ran up the steps of the bank, a fluttering cheque in his hand.

10.5—He came down, bearing a parcel wrapped up in a newspaper.

10.15—The cab he had engaged halted in front of the palatial home of Richard Sheldon.

He ran up the marble steps. He fairly brushed by the servant who answered his ring at the door and stated that his master was in the library.

Into that apartment the detective dashed.

Richard Sheldon looked up with a start at a sight of the white face, the disordered attire, the bloodshot eyes of his unexpected visitor.

"Dean," he cried wonderingly. "In the name of goodness—"

"Stop!" rang out from the detective's lips, in a hoarse, echoing gasp. "No words! You bid for my soul, and I sold; but I cancel the bargain! Blood-money, a curse, a bribe from perdition, I give it back. I spurn it. I refuse it. There, *there*, THERE is your £2,000!"

He flung the package he bore before the appalled Sheldon as he spoke.

Then overstrained nature gave way. He uttered a strange, grating cry, he tore spasmodically at his shirt collar, he reeled suddenly.

10.25—Mr Detective Dean threw up his arms and fell to the floor, prone, senseless.

The merchant arose, trembling in every limb. He stared at the packet of bank-notes; he glared down at the motionless form of his visitor.

His thrilling words haunting his soul, Richard Sheldon made a movement to ring for a servant; then his hand fell nerveless to his side.

What was that? He started and listened! A ring at the front door—sharp, exacting, sudden; a loud, familiar voice—jubilant, bold, aggressive; hurried footsteps, the bumping, dragging thud of some heavy object.

10.30—The little clock on the mantel pealed out two silvery strokes. The door of the library was thrust open, and a man strode in, all excitement, all bustling animation, all triumph—

Colonel Lytle!

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Penance of Berwyn Dean.

Like an old campaigner fresh from the wars, flushed with victory, and bursting joyously in upon an old comrade, Colonel Lytle had unceremoniously entered the library.

With perturbed manner and white, annoyed face, Richard Sheldon greeted him. He had been expecting him. Various telegrams had kept him posted concerning the northward progress of man and treasure, but he had counted on no such interruption and annoyance as the startling and dramatic appearance of Detective Dean had evolved.

Before he could fully analyse the motives of Dean in returning the money, before he could fairly comprehend that the money itself had been returned, the Colonel was overwhelming him with questions.

"Hello!" ejaculated the latter, "what does this mean?" and he stared in wonder alternately from merchant to detective.

"I hardly know; it was so sudden, so dramatic," replied Sheldon, in a choked voice.

"He—he hasn't betrayed us?"

"Hardly. He's in the trap as closely as ourselves."

"Then——"

"He broke in here like a madman—threw that package of bank-notes on the table, called it hush-money, and—" Sheldon gave a graphic description of the startling scene.

"Hum!" muttered Lytle sardonically, "I see. Guilty conscience, remorse; too fine strung for a detective; too sensitive for a tool or confidant. Well, if he doesn't want the money, take it!"

"But it was the price of his silence!"

"He won't talk; he can't afford to. He presents the anomaly of an honest man who would like to be a rascal, and dares not. He'll feel better now, pose as a martyr, do his penance in silence, and trouble us no further."

"But what shall I do with him?"

Lytle inspected the prostrate officer.

"Lift him to a couch, and let him stay there until he recovers. No use making a gossip for the servants; it's only a fainting fit."

"Besides, he may have something to say of importance."

"Exactly," chimed in Lytle, "only"—and his sinister eyes sparkled jubilantly—"all he might say or do, or, for that matter, any one else, need trouble you and me no longer."

"Ah! then, you mean—" began Sheldon suspensefully, and with eager excitement.

"We are made for life!"

"The Ringold treasure——"

"Is ours! Do you understand, old chum, crony, partner? We're rich! we're nabobs, Crœsuses, kings!" And Colonel Lytle slapped his friend and familiar sharply on the shoulder, and chuckled gloatingly.

"You've got the——"

"White God! yes, at a cost! Five thousand in cold, hard cash, half-a-dozen lives, and a legacy of fanatic vengeance!" and Lytle laughed contemptuously—"but I've got it!"

"Where is it?"

Sheldon's voice shook with poorly suppressed emotion and anxiety.

"Pretty glad to see it, eh?" demanded Lytle tantalisingly.

"Don't torture me—don't play with me!" cried Sheldon sharply. "I'm on the pins and needles of suspense. I tell you, Lytle, I'm standing on the verge of an abyss, into which I feared some untimely accident would topple me any day of your absence."

"As bad as that?" muttered Lytle seriously.

"Yes. The ready cash I had to supply you, the two thousand for the detective, the losses on the Board of Trade, bad investments generally, had all contributed to bring me practically to the verge of ruin. How I have tided over, I don't know. I have been operating on borrowed money for over a month; every penny of my own is locked up in the Golcondas: I can't draw it out. The mine isn't paying, and I expect a crash in that quarter any day."

"But why now talk of failure—a crash?" interrupted Lytle buoyantly. "We have the White God — Ralph Ringold's treasure-chest, his hidden fortune. One million —two—a royal dowry, at the least! Come! Help me in with it."

The prone form on the couch moved restively, but the plotters noted it not. The one all gloating, supercilious triumph, the other verily quivering with emotion, they advanced to the door, and Lytle threw it open.

"There it is!" he announced.

An iron box lay just near the threshold of the vestibule doors, whither the cabman who had brought it and Lytle from the train had helped the latter drag it.

"Take hold!" ordered Lytle.

"Where shall we take it?"

"Into the library, of course. Why, man! you're fairly stupefied. Don't you want to have a look at your treasure?"

After considerable exertion the two men managed to get the heavy box across the threshold of the merchant's study.

Lytle did not delay in exposing its contents. He drew a key from his pocket, fitted it to the lock of the iron box, and threw back the lid.

"Look!" he ordered.

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An awed expression crossed Sheldon's face as he peered. The white, blank face of the idol stared up at him. In its squat hideousness, it was repulsive; it seemed to squint and shrink from the light of day.

"Did—did you open it—examine it?" queried he confusedly.

"Not I! Too quick work in getting over the border safely to think of that. No, no; original package! Ha ha! I only appropriated one thing—this. It was blazing in the forehead of that impossible monster, and I fancied it, and had it set for my more classic bosom. See?"

The Colonel indicated a peculiar yellow brilliant that gleamed from his immaculate shirt front, and irradiated it with a pale, straw-colour glamour, and then he pointed to the cavity in the head of the idol, where it had reposed for centuries.

"You are sure this is *the* idol—our idol?" queried Sheldon.

"Sure? Yes, it's ours—very much ours! There is but one White God. It's the end of our scheming, Sheldon—possession! Think what it has cost—others! We sent that devoted martyr, Burgoyne, to gaol on a trumped-up charge; we have kept the girl, Patrice, in seclusion for five years; we have plotted, sinned, waited. Well, the last act is on. Get a chisel, and ring down the curtain. Then for the final transformation scene in Aladdin, or the Wonderful Scamp!"

In a truly jovial mood was Colonel Lytle this fine, autumnal day! And a really lamb-like and innocent trust in the perfect justice and honour of his friend he seemed to repose! That did not not trouble him, however—treachery. Had he not documents at home, in his private desk, carefully saved, devoutly treasured, the production of which would unmask all his ally's villainies, if he ever "kicked over the traces?"

"Get a chisel," he repeated. "Here, lift this magnificent specimen of carved abomination to the table."

They raised the dumb deity from the iron box. Then Sheldon sped from the apartment. He returned quickly with the tool designated.

"See!" spoke Lytle, pointing to a seamed section at the back of the figure—"there is where Ringold cut out the piece, stored his treasure, and cemented it up again with a paste made of the rock dust."

"I see," murmured Sheldon. "It cuts as if it was pretty fresh, doesn't it, Lytle?"

"That's all right. Ah! you have it!"

The loose section came free. It toppled to the floor.

"Drag the treasure out!" spoke Lytle excitedly. "Ah!"

"*Empty!*"

Empty—past grand and present grand graduates of the glorious school of fraud, rottenness and corruption!—empty, after all of hope, and avarice, and crime, and guilt, to be pricked by justice—mighty fabrics of wrong, erected carefully, only to crash to ruins at the touch of unrelenting fate!

Empty!—hearts and hands alike. They groped, they shook the idol, they inspected it again and again—empty!

They stared at one another blankly, like two crushed beings shipwrecked at the high tide of fortune. Three white faces glared one at the other, and the face of the idol was the whitest, and seemed to mock and sneer at their dismay.

"Murdered by the law!"

Out upon the hushed air of the room rang the sudden words, solemnly, ominously.

"*Resurgam!*"

The plotters fell back. The detective, rising from the couch, advanced towards them like a spectre.

His eyes swept their craven faces, and the face of the squat idol. Once again he repeated the strange words; then, turning, he dashed like a hunted fugitive from the house.

"Murdered by the law"—one convict, 407? No! no! his honour, the golden years of his early manhood, the golden years of his young life; not the man himself!

That, by a miracle, through Providence, had not come about—the detective knew it; the detective felt sure of it.

"*Resurgam*"—"I shall rise again!" He *had* risen! Convict 407 had written his own epitaph!

Therefore, he was alive. Detective Dean had overheard all that had passed between the two plotters in Sheldon's library. Therefore, convict 407 was innocent.

At noon that day a humble-browed, subdued-looking man sought an audience with the inspector of police.

He asked to be reinstated on the detective force; he asked a special and secret commission to open up and reinvestigate the case of "dead convict 407."

At dusk that afternoon, Berwyn Dean started out upon a quest that was a penance—a pilgrimage of contrition, remorse and self-abnegation, that should end only at the shrine of innocence vindicated.

(*To be continued.*)

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CORPULENCE.

INCREASING POPULARITY OF AN EFFECTUAL CURE.

Many of our readers are, doubtless, familiar with the nature of the extraordinary revolution in the cure of obesity which, within recent years, has been wrought by the original researches of that now eminent expert, Mr. F. Cecil Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. It is evident that the certainty, the rapidity, and the agreeable surroundings of his curative process have been recognised, in a very large degree, among ladies and gentlemen belonging to the highest social circles. Keen observers who have an opportunity of judging inform us, through the pages of society papers and otherwise, that owing to the general employment of Mr. Russell's treatment extreme obesity is becoming as much a thing of the past, at fashionable gatherings, as intoxication; and, no doubt, it will soon be regarded as nearly as disgraceful. The issue of an eighteenth edition of the author's singularly convincing little text-book, "Corpulency, and the Cure," however, serves to remind us that the popularity of the system has now reached spheres far remote from those of West-end fashion. The book of 256 pages may be had (post free) by sending six penny stamps to Mr. Russell's offices, as above; and it is worth the careful attention of those who wish to free themselves of a burden of fat—not merely because it is unseemly and adds enormously to the apparent age of the sufferer—but because extreme obesity terribly interferes with the energy necessary in these days of competition to make one's way in the world, or even to earn a very modest competency. A large proportion of the letters of Mr. Russell's grateful correspondents refer to their delight at being enabled—within a very brief period, and without any irksome conditions implying semi-starvation—to attack their accustomed tasks with pleasure instead of wearied disgust, through being reduced to their normal weight. The popularity of the system is also largely due, doubtless, to the English hatred of mystery, which is utterly swept aside by Mr. Russell. He fully explains his modus operandi, and supplies the receipt for his preparation.

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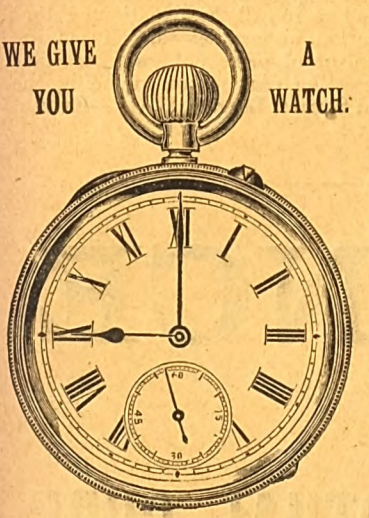

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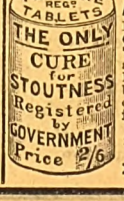

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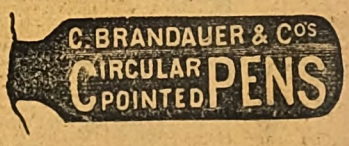

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No. 8

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SHORT STORIES

No. 373.] [ONE PENNY.

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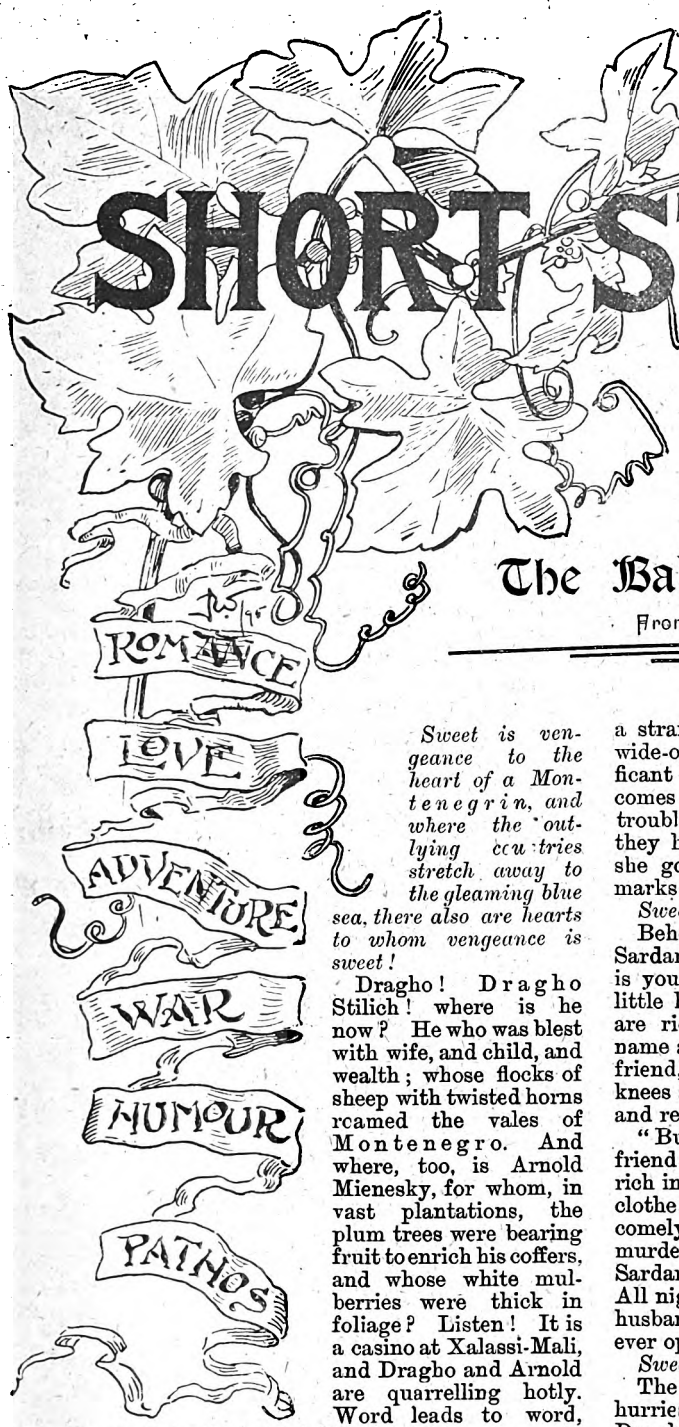
For the Week ending February 22nd, 1896.

The Ballad of Jane Stilich.

From the Montenegrin. By A. T.



Sweet is vengeance to the heart of a Montenegrin, and where the outlying countries stretch away to the gleaming blue sea, there also are hearts to whom vengeance is sweet!

Dragho! Dragho Stilich! where is he now? He who was blest with wife, and child, and wealth; whose flocks of sheep with twisted horns roamed the vales of Montenegro. And where, too, is Arnold Mienesky, for whom, in vast plantations, the plum trees were bearing fruit to enrich his coffers, and whose white mulberries were thick in foliage? Listen! It is a casino at Xalassi-Mali, and Dragho and Arnold are quarrelling hotly. Word leads to word, and rage mounts high in both their breasts. Ah, hold your breath! What deed is this? Arnold draws his dagger, and Dragho, smitten, falls to the earth murmuring "Vengeance."

Sweet is vengeance to the heart of a Montenegrin.

And now who is this who comes weeping, to claim the dead? Jane—Jane Stilich, the widow. And the neighbours lift the body in their arms and carry him where the fire is smouldering upon his own hearth, and lay him on the mat, where the dying flames send a strange glow upon the pallid cheek and light up his wide-open eyes. What is the meaning of that significant gaze from those staring eyes? The priest, who comes with holy water to bless the dead, is strangely troubled. Only Jane Stilich understands, and when they have placed beside him his weapons and his pipe she goes forth to seek the Sardar. The hour-glass marks four o'clock.

Sweet is vengeance to the heart of a Montenegrin.

Behold, it is the widow who enters the house of the Sardar. She speaks: "Hear me, oh friend! My son is young. An ear of corn is the heaviest sword his little hand can hold, and I have no brothers. You are rich in brothers, and four sons who bear your name are of an age to carry arms. You were Dragho's friend, punish his murderer," and Jane fell upon her knees at the Sardar's feet. He fixes his gaze upon her and replies:

"But look you, Dragho Stilich has been no more my friend since last year's Christmas feast was held, when, rich in flocks, he refused to give me four sheepskins to clothe my four brave sons. But you—you are fair and comely—my sons and I will search the country for the murderer, and then you shall give yourself as wife to the Sardar." Jane's eyes blaze with fury, and she departs. All night long Jane is weeping over the body of her lost husband, and Dragho gazes steadfastly before him with ever open eyes.

Sweet is vengeance to the heart of a Montenegrin.

The skies are bright with another day. Far and near hurries the tortured widow. Among the friends of Dragho she looks in vain for one who will arm himself and seek the fugitive. With one accord they answer: "Ah, but Arnold, too, has always been our good friend." And then, with despair in her soul, Jane turns her steps towards the house of the Sardar. "It is well—I accept the compact."

The eyes of the old Sardar flash beneath their hoary brows. And Jane, once more is she alone in her widowed home; once more she weeps over her dead; then, bending low, she whispers in his ear, and lo! the

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open eyes close in quiet rest and Jane weeps on, and the hour-glass marks four o'clock.

Sweet is vengeance to the heart of a Montenegrin.

"Awake—hasten, my sons—let us prepare powder and ball and rations for the days we shall wander far from our home. Where are the hunting knives? Tighten your belts that the gurrine may closely protect your chests, bring forth the deerskin robes, that the dews and showers of night may not destroy our arms and our stores. Arnold Mienesky has flown to the mountain heights, and we go to take his life, for is it not he who has killed Dragho, our dearest friend?"

Sweet is vengeance to the heart of a Montenegrin.

Skilful is he and wary—the old Sardar, and soon the fugitive shall feel the danger that is near him. The Sardar discovers his tracks, and on the first day they meet, one of the four brave sons falls dead, and when the second day breaks, behold another son is slain. The Sardar hesitates, and questions his course. Arnold, the murderer, bethinks him if it would not be well to surrender. The priest seeks the widow and urges reconciliation. With fury and passionate words she refuses, and as she speaks, the sand falls and the glass marks four o'clock.

Sweet is vengeance to the heart of a Montenegrin.

"She refuses in wrath," is whispered through the streets of Xalassi-Mali—but the people, still hoping, send to the Lord Bishop a hundred sequins—the price of a head. With the Lord Bishop rests the charge of calling a tribunal of reconcilation. In the great church all is prepared for the mass of peace. Ring out, O bells, for the blessed mass of reconciliation, and ring for the twelve young mothers who come, carrying their babes in their arms, to knock at the widow's door. "Jane, Jane, open the door to us—we bring gold and 'broidered kerchiefs," but no response comes from the close fastened door.

Sweet is vengeance to the heart of a Montenegrin.

"Jane, our good neighbour Jane, in the name of our children we ask for forgiveness. Arnold repents. It was but a dispute. Malice there was none. It was the dagger which slew Dragho. The dagger alone is guilty—only listen, the priest will come to shatter it and pronounce it accursed. Open the door, Jane, open to us." But Jane Stilich is silent and relentless. She has sworn an oath to her dead, and woe befal him who breaks his oath.

Sweet is vengeance to the heart of a Montenegrin.

Dragho's murderer wanders once more through the forest's depths. This time, supported by his two brothers and by the two sons whom death has not stolen away, the aged Sardar again essays the capture. Fear seizes upon Arnold; to fly or to search a place of hiding, in both lurks danger. Enveloped by the dark shades of night, wild beasts beset his way, and his breast is filled with terror—his days are days of hurrying, fearful flight from his memories. The aged Sardar sounds a note of triumph! Arnold abandons his defence. He surrenders—he is the Sardar's captive. And the vision arises before the Sardar of Jane—the fair widow waiting for him in her lonely home. And now behold the victorious procession that enters Xalassi-Mali. Men, women, and the children in the streets, follow in the train of the Sardar and his two brave sons, the prisoner Arnold Mienesky in their midst.

Sweet is vengeance to the heart of a Montenegrin.

From afar the drone of the pipes and the noise of many feet reaches Jane, and sends a thrill to her heart as she reads in the din the announcement that the Sardar has returned. No time for thought. She opens her coffers and takes out the rich marriage robe which has lain untouched since the joyful day that saw her Dragho's bride. Its folds shake out the scents of lavender and asperule. How beautiful she is in this bright garb. Her fingers sparkle with gems, and jewels shine in her ears; on her head-dress rings together a double row of Turkish sequins. In one hand she holds her distaff, in the other her household keys. "He has avenged Dragho to possess Dragho's wife and Dragho's flocks. It is well. I am his."

Sweet is vengeance to the heart of a Montenegrin.

"Make way, make way for the procession!" The heralds proclaim the Sardar's approach. His brothers and his sons still follow him. Jane, happy Jane, climbs to the roof of her house to bid them welcome. The old Sardar thinks upon her charms; his wrinkled visage is full of ardour. He hastens to open the door which alone separates him from the woman he longs to possess. As he knocks a voice from above falls in clearest tone upon his ears. "Behold your bride!" He turns quickly, eagerly, with anxious longing, and Jane flings herself from the lofty roof as the echoes repeat to the affrighted Sardar: "Behold your bride!" Where is now the spirit of Jane, Jane Stilich, as she lies dead, dead before the Sardar and his followers?

And the glass marks four o'clock, and the Sardar has not Jane Stilich, nor has he Dragho's flocks of sheep with twisted horns which roam the vales of Montenegro.

Sweet is vengeance to the heart of a Montenegrin, and where the outlying countries stretch away to the gleaming blue sea, there also are hearts to whom vengeance is sweet.

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The Startling Legend of The Weathercock.

Adapted from the French by Edward Vizetelly.

The little town of Saint-Vrain-sur-Mesle is rightly proud of its church, which is quite a marvel of Gothic architecture, erected by the Prémontrés monks, who founded their first monastery there, and for many years devoted half their immense revenue to building the sacred edifice.

The order at that time was in all the splendour of its power, and the monks, to mark their pious enthusiasm and enhance the glory of Saint Augustin, their patron, determined that the spire of their church should surpass that of any other in Burgundy.

The steeple, which is beautifully sculptured, as indeed is the whole of the monument, towers up three hundred feet above the ground, and at that altitude, from a terrace surrounded by a forged iron balustrade, an octagonal spire with prominent knobs of stone running along each arris extends into the air another hundred feet and is terminated by a flowery cross.

The architects of the building seem, to have thought this spire would never require to be touched, for they made no provision for ascending it, and it so happened that one day when lightning struck the superb weathercock which in those times darted backward and forward in the wind, above the cross, and sent it flying to pieces, the priests were in great perplexity as to how to have it replaced.

This was all the more vexatious as the congregation who were for the most part exceedingly superstitious, saw an ill-omen for the church, town, and crops in the accident, and to increase the trouble, someone all at once discovered that the remnants of the zinc bird, still remaining on high, seen from the threshold of the parsonage, had all the aspect of a silhouette of the Devil.

It was then recalled that during the building of the church the Grand Prior Pancrace, according to the legend, was one day at prayer, when his thoughts having wandered to the magnificence of his work, the Evil One cast a feeling of pride into his heart. The saintly man whilst at once rapidly performing an act of penance, had quietly taken his chaplet from his belt, thrown it over Satan's head, and after dragging him several times round his cell, sprinkling him with holy water, had condemned him to keep the building in perfect repair from the foundations to the cross; but naught had been said anent the weathercock, and it was now averred that the Prince of Darkness was avenging himself on this poor zinc fowl!

In order to allay the anxiety of the inhabitants and put an end to all this silly superstitious talk, it became absolutely necessary that something should be done. The priests, therefore, put their heads together, and having studied the documents relating to the building of the church and ascertained the exact proportions of the weathercock, ordered a brand-new one from Paris; and when one Sunday morning the announcement was at length made from the pulpit that the damage was about to be repaired, the satisfaction was general.

A fortnight afterwards the cock, very carefully packed, was delivered at the vicarage, and being removed from its case was exhibited to the public gaze, when it very soon became an object of admiration to the curious and devout.

The bird's arrival, however, was marked by several small misfortunes. His comb, cut into little sharp teeth, tore the lips of a babe who had leaned from its mother's arms to kiss his head; his beak scratched the forehead of a girl who had been pushed against it by some rough boys endeavouring to approach nearer the object of general attention; the point of his tail made a great rent in the vicar's cassock, and his reverence remarked to one of his curates, that he should not be at all sorry when the bird was definitely fixed in position.

But that was just the question. Who was to place it there? Inquiries had been made, but no one sufficiently venturesome, steeplejack or other, had as yet presented himself to perform the task.

At last, however, a slater came forward and announced himself ready and willing to do the job. Cap in hand, he stood listening with deference to the vicar's instruction, nodding his head as the explanation proceeded, and calculating in a thoughtful business-like manner the difficulty and expense of the work. Stroking his chin with his hand, he fixed the amount: so much for a pole, so much for rope, so much for hooks and rings, so much for labour.

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The bargain was struck, and the workman, wishing the priest good-day, was about to cross the threshold when the latter, calling him back, inquired with some concern, whether he were quite sure of his strength and courage, if he were not afraid of giddiness, whether he had calculated and considered all the danger of the undertaking?

The man stared at the vicar surprised, rolling back his sleeve he exhibited his muscular arm, slapped his huge thigh, expanded his chest, drew himself up erect like a Titan ready to scale the heavens. Then he went his way.

* * * * *

At last the great day came.

It was a couple of hours after sunrise. Refreshed by sound sleep, invigorated by a hearty meal, the brave slater ascended the steps of the steeple, followed by two assistants carrying the cock, pole and cordage to the terrace.

All the population of Saint Vrain, reinforced by contingents from neighbouring parishes, are out of doors and swaying to and fro at the foot of the steeple. Gendarmes in full uniform move among them, preserving order and keeping an open space round the tower in case something might fall from the top. Within the church a few compassionate and anxious old women are burning candles and praying for the unknown man who is risking his life up above. The vicar is thumbing the pages of his breviary, all in a tremble, in the vestry, daring neither to go outside and see for himself what is transpiring, nor to ask anyone for news.

All at once a sort of dull prolonged yell bursts from the crowd assembled in the streets and squares.

The man has appeared on the terrace!

Only half his body has as yet issued from the door. He is pulling something up behind him. Presently he is seen unrolling cords and rope which he places in separate lots at the edge of the parapet. He is next perceived placing a pole taller than himself at the base of the spire; finally the cock appears. He seems to roll it up in something and then lays it down on the terrace.

He is at the base of the spire.

He walks round it on a narrow ledge, encircling it with a rope ending in a slip-knot. In this rope are passed two others which dangle downward and are finally attached to the cock and pole respectively.

Now he's off!

He passes the thick rope round his loins, tightens the running knot until it brings him near the spire, then making an effort with his hands and knees he advances sideways, rising slightly at each movement and thus tracing the initial curve in a spiral which takes him to the foremost projecting stone. There he fixes a hook fastened to his chest by a short leather thong, and with his two hands now free, undoes the slip-knot, tightens the thick rope and recommences his turning, ascending movement to the second prominent piece of masonry.

Forty times in the course of an hour, which seemed an age, the terrified spectators, holding their breath, watch him appear and disappear in turn, proceeding higher and higher, quicker and quicker, in proportion as the diameter of the spire decreases until his head is on a level with the small circular platform supporting the cross. He is then seen to twirl his legs round the spire, which at that point is quite small, and again tightening the thick rope girdle, wipes his forehead with his cuff, and remains motionless, his head bent slightly forward as if recovering breath. Then he takes a flask from his pocket and has a pull at it.

That flask contained brandy, and it has always been a matter of discussion among the wiseacres of Saint-Vrain, as to whether on that occasion the bold slater took too little or too much.

From the height he has now attained, he is able to touch the bottom of the cross without an effort. After a few moments' rest he is seen passing his arms round the four iron bars by which it is kept in position. He has encircled it two or three times with the rope and, having caught this with the hook fastened to his chest, has clutched hold of two of the iron bars, let go the spire with his legs, and, straining with his arms, has hoisted himself up into a kneeling position on the platform.

Then measuring the height of the cross with the eye, he notices with satisfaction that it is barely ten feet. As the pole is twelve feet long, he sees he will only have to hook it on once, which will shorten and simplify the last part of the ascent considerably.

He stands erect, passes the rope once round the perpendicular part of the cross, fixes the hook at his chest into it, seizes one of the two small cords hanging attached to the thick coil, and draws up to him the pole which until then had been lying at the base of the spire.

This pole, armed at the end with a three pronged claw, is encircled from distance to distance with rolls of leather, interlaced with wire, which stand out very prominently from it. The man hooks the claw on the flower at the top of the cross, and in a few minutes, thanks to his chest-hook and the slater's stirrups fastened to his knees, climbs up the pole as up a knotted cord, but with this advantage that the former being inflexible and firmly fixed by the broad claw, does not sway about, and at last he finds himself seated on the flower with his chest against the pivot of the weather-cock which extends barely a couple of feet above his head. He fastens himself firmly to this rod, and by the aid of the second cord draws up the cock.

When the multitude below perceived this human figure rise into the air, more daring than the daring edifice he towered over, they broke into a wild roar of applause which ascended with terrible harmony to the unfortunate wretch who had aroused it.

That was his death warrant.

Up to that fatal moment, the idea had never entered that humble heart and narrow mind, that in the eyes of the world there could be any difference between him and the bird that flies by on the wing, or the blade of grass that is trampled under foot. And even now, a few minutes ago, amidst the terrible undertaking he was about to crown, not one of his iron nerves had quivered, not a thrill had passed through any of his fibres; he had reflected neither on the danger he was exposing himself to, nor on his courage. He had said to himself that it was hard work, that was all. His thoughts had not gone further.

But at this spontaneous explosion from all those souls beneath him, his eyes which until then had never once caught a glimpse of the radiant magnificence of glory, his ears which had never heard the formidable thunder of acclamation, both opened amidst dazzling splendour, and he was seized with a sort of frenzy.

From the height at which he stood he embraced the heavens, towered above the earth, and the thousands of human beings who were gesticulating and shouting at his feet seemed smaller to him than ants. He who had never known but the wretched side of humanity, suddenly understood its greatness and felt imbued with all its majesty!

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The multitude saw him stoop down, seat himself on the flower, take the weathercock on his knees, remove the cloth in which he had wrapped it to save it from injury in the transit; then, holding the bird in one hand, and assisting himself with the pivot which he grasped with the other, he stood erect. Stooping slightly again, he raised the remains of the old cock with his shoulder and sent them bounding down the spire on to the roof of the nave with a great clatter. Then taking the cock by the tail, he placed it on the pivot waiting to receive it. He bent down once more, set it in motion, and another shout from the crowd greeted the first turn of the new acquisition.

The unlucky fellow had now only to descend. By sliding on to the branches of the cross first of all, then down the pole, he would find at the top of the spire the cords which had assisted him in hoisting up pole and cock. He would then only have to twist the rope once round each leg, and let himself slowly descend, with his back comfortably leaning against the roof of the spire. In three minutes at the most he would reach the terrace.

But that shout, that shout of triumph, uttered by the swerving multitude below, had wrested from him the little reason he still retained.

An uncontrollable burst of pride, as vulgar as himself, as frightful as the courage he had been displaying, put into his head the mad idea of surpassing all he had till then achieved by a more startling act of daring still.

He bestrode the weathercock, and by a powerful movement of the loins set it in motion.

At the sight of this fearful folly, the crowd stood there silent, motionless, holding their breath, and with parted lips and straining eyes watched the bird whirl round and round.

One minute, two minutes, three, four, five minutes passed.

The cock was still turning!

The man who, first of all had bowed with his cap, was now bending forward straining the cock's neck with his arms. He sought to pass one of his legs over the bird's tail; but whether it was that he had already lost his presence of mind or that the obstacle was too high, he was unable to do so. He also tried, by stretching his leg, to attain the flower at the summit of the cross, but he waved it about in space in vain. In bestriding the cock he had probably taken a spring, for his feet were dangling in the air. The people saw him cross and lock them together under the bird's stomach.

Then the man drew himself up, opened his arms, and stretched them out on either side of him with a gesture of supreme pride.

He remained so.

And the cock continued whirling round and round.

As this frightful scene became prolonged the crowd began to stir. Persons looked at one another, nudged each other, not yet daring to speak. Some of the women began to cross themselves, others to faint. At last a piercing shriek was heard. A young girl had fallen backward in hysterics. At the same instant, as if by the effect of a shock from a current of electricity, several other women fell down, victims to the same sort of attack; children yelled and a great many persons began running about in bewilderment, crying out unaware of what they did or what they said.

This had been the order of things for at least a quarter of an hour. The cock at last had stopped, but it was perceived with horror, that the man was still motionless on its back with legs crossed and extended arms.

Someone suggested that the vicar, who was still in the vestry awaiting the end of the job, ought to be informed of the strange turn affairs had taken and this was done.

When the worthy man came out on to the square to look for himself he at first sought to reassure those who spoke to him, but his heart, nevertheless, was beating very fast. Not having been present at the whole scene, he was not so much affected as the spectators.

The man was seated so thoroughly upright, his gesture so neat and firm that the fact of his remaining so long in the same attitude could be naught else than bravado pushed to the extreme. It was in that sense the vicar spoke to those about him, but whilst doing so he felt horrified at heart, and he hurried off a messenger to the doctor to request his presence and his telescope.

Shortly afterwards the telescope on its tripod stood pointing towards the weathercock, and the doctor placing his eye to it to adjust the sight, bounded backward with an exclamation.

At that cry the vicar rushed forward, and in his turn looked.

In the black circle of the objective, standing out against the clear background of the sky, he saw the slater stiff, and motionless as a statue. His face was green, daubed with two blackish spots on the cheeks and contracted by a frightful rictus displaying his tongue hanging down between his teeth, which were uncovered by the lips; the eyes, wide open and fixed, were gazing upward, the white of them alone being visible.

The vicar turned to the doctor.

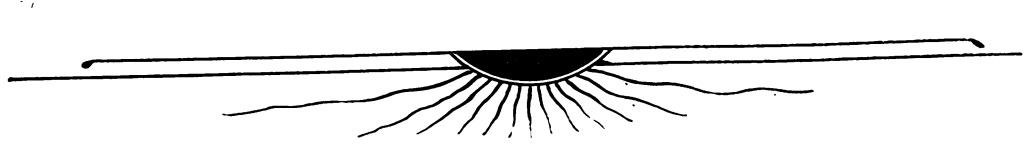
"Is he still alive?" he inquired.

"Perhaps," answered the medical man; "if he has not been struck by apoplexy, nor gone into a fainting fit, immediately followed by cadaverous-like rigidity, he must be in a state of catalepsy, to remain hooked on by the legs in that way!"

"I know what my duty is," exclaimed the priest, and accompanied by some assistants the worthy man ascended to the terrace and took the poor wretch absolution.

Towards evening a few carrion crows began turning round the steeple; the next day two or three were seen to alight on the skull. Soon afterwards, vultures arrived from the mountains far away.

The cock no longer turns, and the legend has it that it will remain stationary until the end of time, as motionless as the stones of the sacred edifice it crowns.



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When the Birds Begin to Sing

By Winifred Graham. *Author of "Through the Valley," "Six First-Class Passengers," etc.*

SUMMARY.

Philip Roche marries Eleanor Grebby, daughter of a farmer, and they spend their honeymoon on the Continent. On their return to Richmond, Eleanor becomes friendly with a frivolous widow, Mrs. Mounteagle, against her husband's wishes. She is introduced to Carol Quinton, who fascinates her. Her husband is heart-broken, and consults his cousin, Erminie Henderson, who comes to stay with them.

CHAPTER VII.

The Shadows Rise and Fall.

"I am so sorry, Giddy, darling," Eleanor writes, "but I can't possibly go to town with you this afternoon, as Philip's cousin, Miss Henderson, has just arrived to stay, and her *fiancé*, Nelson, is coming, too. She is quite jolly, and I thought she would be horrid. Many thanks for sending on that silly little note from Mr. Quinton. Why did he address it to your house? I suppose he forgot 'Lyndhurst,' though I told him the name.

"Ever your devoted,

"Eleanor."

"Dense little idiot!" sighs Giddy. "She cannot understand poor Carol's passion, and yet he kissed her in the hansom. It was like Eleanor to tell me. She always gives herself away. I pity those refreshingly young people who can never keep anything to themselves." Giddy waves up to the windows of Lyndhurst as she drives by.

"Who is that little Jezebel?" asks Erminie.

"My great friend, Mrs. Mounteagle," replies Eleanor.

"Tell her to knock off blanc de perle," responds Miss Henderson, "she would be twice as good-looking."

"I should like to see Giddy if any one interfered with her appearance! But come to the fire, Miss Henderson."

"You must call me Erminie. I am your cousin, you know."

"Yes. What was Philip like as a small boy? You were children together he tells me."

"Yes, and Phil was a little wretch. He used to pull my hair and tease me frightfully, but always ended by spending his much-valued pocket-money in sweets and presents to make it up. Ah! you have a really good-hearted husband, my dear, and I hope you appreciate him!"

"When is Mr. Lane expected?" asks Eleanor, fleeing from the subject of Philip's virtues.

"In about an hour."

"Then I shall go and change my dress now. I look so fearfully dowdy in this brown thing."

"Who is that little Jezebel?"

Eleanor is very fond of talking over her own clothes, but takes small interest in those of other people. She has yawned twice during Erminie's account of her trousseau, and only brightens at the prospect of trying on the hats that are to be sent for approval the following day.

"It will be fun to see how *I* look in them," she says gleefully, and Erminie is so charmed with her frankness that she forgets to condemn the evident self love in Philip's wife.

"It is not often my husband is at home in the daytime; it is quite in your honour," says Eleanor, as Mr. Roche enters. "The City generally claims him. Stay and entertain Erminie, Philip, while I adorn myself. Put on some coal, and make her sit in a comfortable chair."

Then Eleanor flits away, leaving the cousins together.

"What a dear little thing she is, and so pretty!" declares Erminie.

Philip gives her a grateful look.

"Things will go better now you are here," he replies.

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"I say, Phil, you do *like* Nelson, don't you?"

"Of course, he is an awfully good chap. Why do you ask?"

"Only because I think so much of him. Do you know I love him ten times more now than when we were first engaged."

"Really! Well that is on the right side anyhow. He is young, rich, handsome."

"Yes."

Erminie is looking down nervously, and interlacing her fingers.

"If I had loved him so well at first," she sighs, "I could not have deceived him."

"Deceived!" cries Philip. "My dear girl what do you mean?"

"You confided in me, Phil," she continues, "I will confide in you. Yet I hardly know how to put it, it sounds so dreadful! I often drift into wrong-doing unintentionally, then I am afraid to draw back, to own up. Nelson, as I told you, is rich; he imagines that I, too, am well off. I pretended I had money in fact (you may guess how tempting it was) before our engagement, when I wanted, as some people vulgarly term it, 'to catch him!' Bah! what a vile expression! I did not consider the consequences, and the day of reckoning has yet to come, when I must confess myself a dowerless wife, and pretend to have lost through misfortune the money I never possessed. Ah! how lowered I should be in his eyes *if* he knew—*if he knew.*"

She wrings her hands in despair.

"Why did I ever do it? Why did I stoop to anything so mean—so despicable? What shall I say, Philip—how explain? You have always advised me well—if you don't utterly despise me now, show me the way out of my folly."

He is genuinely sorry for Erminie, for he can well imagine how she was drawn into the error, and, thoughtless, fell! He has seen her in many a trouble before to-day, and determines to help her if possible.

A thought strikes him.

"Are you willing," he asks, "to run a risk?"

"Run a risk! What wouldn't I do?"

"I've got an idea, then. I know of some mining shares which are likely to have a very big rise."

Erminie's face brightens.

"Oh, Phil!" she cries, "I was hoping you might suggest putting me into a good thing. Tell me more about it. How much are the shares? What is the mine called?"

"Four shillings, at present. The name is Klerksdorp."

"How many would you advise me to buy?"

"What do you say to putting £2,000 in it?"

"All that I have!" with a little gasp.

"Yes." He speaks convincingly.

"I hardly dare. How much will the shares rise?"

Philip laughs.

"If I knew that," he answers, "it would be worth something! No Erminie, I cannot name the profit, but it is likely to be large. I have the *very best* information on the subject, or I would not fire you to speculate. Under the circumstances, it is the wisest plan to follow. If you lose, well, your husband has plenty of money, and you can bewail the loss of your fortune, with the failure of the 'Klerksdorp.'"

"And if the shares go up, I am saved!" she cries enthusiastically, drawing a deep breath. "Oh! Phil, you are a dear!"

Erminie flings her arms round his neck, and kisses him.

"Two thousand pounds!" she murmurs. "My little all."

"You will get 10,000 shares for that sum, which may become worth—— No, I won't guess, or raise your hopes. You know what speculations are?"

"I do, indeed. Have I not lost many a year's savings already through unsatisfactory ventures? But a drowning woman catches at a straw, and whichever way it turns out, Nelson must never guess that I deceived him! You'll back me up, won't you, and see me through this?"

* * * * *

Nelson Lane and Erminie Henderson have been staying over a week at "Lyndhurst."

The quarrels between Philip and Eleanor have not recurred since their visitor's arrival, for Eleanor has little chance of meeting Giddy. Erminie always wants her attention, and makes such fun of the "painted lady," as

"You are a lucky man, Mr. Lane."

she calls Mrs. Mounteagle, that Eleanor drops the subject of her friend next door.

Nelson is the most pleasant companion imaginable, and is not selfish over his love for Erminie, though it is easy to see how mutually devoted the couple are. They never forget their duty to host or hostess in their infatuation for each other.

Eleanor likes Nelson immensely, and they are the greatest friends.

One morning she is pacing up and down the terrace in the crisp, frosty air, waiting for Erminie to join her. They are all going to the Penn's Ponds to "look at the ice," which is not yet considered safe enough to bear.

Nelson comes up, and walks by her side; the exercise puts a warm glow into their cheeks.

"Erminie is just finishing her letters," he says; "she will be out directly."

"I love Erminie," declares Eleanor; "she is so sweet to me. You are a lucky man, Mr. Lane."

"I wish I were worthy of her," he says, with a sigh.

Eleanor catches the sadness in his tone.

"I believe you are fretting about something," she says. "You look as if you had a weight on your mind."

Nelson laughs off the remark, but his inward care deepens. Even this simple woman can read it at a glance!

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"Fool that I was," he thinks, condemning himself bitterly. "to stoop to such imposture to win the woman I love. But she thought I was rich from the first, and I did not like to undeceive her. I'll work like a horse and make up for it somehow, besides she has money of her own. What a miserable misunderstanding it has been. Why did I let her believe?"

"You are very silent," remarks Eleanor, watching his expression. "What are you thinking of?"

"My sins of the past and how to redeem them in the future."

"Oh! don't bother about your sins this morning, it is much too bright and exhilarating in the frosty air, besides, here is Erminie. Doesn't she look a duck in that fur toque? Come, I am tired of waiting."

* * * * *

Nelson's greatest friend, Jack Woodherst, came to him the following day in the City. They had been like brothers since their boyhood, and were deeply attached to each other.

Buries his face in the cushions.

"Hulloa, old man," cries Nelson, "what's up?" noting his friend's harassed, care-worn look.

Jack holds out his hand mechanically, his eyes are haggard and blood-shot from want of sleep, his face is pale as death—drawn, old!

"I am in awful straits for money," he replies, "and I have come to implore you, Nelson, to buy my shares in the 'Golden Link Mine.' I received them for an interest I had in the property. I know they will become very valuable. I must raise £1,000. Will you let me have it for these shares? They are intrinsically worth a great deal more, but being at present unmarketable, I cannot sell them. They will only stand you in 2s. 6d. a share."

Nelson controls a smile, and casting a glance at his watch chain, thinks that a few links of it are probably of more value than all the proffered shares.

Jack looks pleadingly.

"You *will* help me!"

Violent impulses are disturbing Nelson's mind. He must help his friend, but how can he? Such a sum from his small capital! It would be robbing Erminie. She must be his first consideration.

Then the black thought of how little he has considered her rushes across him, and—the ending. Only one end. He must be utterly ruined after their marriage by some imaginary disaster, which he has not yet concocted.

Yes, utterly ruined! So what difference would this make? He will have enough left to go on for a time, while arranging the impending catastrophe.

These thoughts pass in a second through his mind.

He *will* help his friend! This good action may comfort him, and palliate in a measure his deceit.

"Jack, old fellow," he says, "I'll do it!"

Jack grasps his hand, and is speechless for a moment with relief.

"Nelson," he cries, "you're a brick."

But Nelson Lane cannot endure thanks, and escapes from Jack's gratitude with a lighter heart than he has had for many a long day.

He dismisses the shares from his mind, however, hoping that Jack, who is going back to Western Australia, may sometime repay him.

His wedding-day approaches, and still unconfessed he leads Erminie from the altar, and together they go to foreign climes, each with a secret buried in their hearts.

* * * * *

"I quite miss Erminie and Nelson," says Eleanor, glancing at her husband across the tea-table with a bright smile. "They were most delightful people certainly."

"Yes, dear, and I really think we have been happier since their visit. They were so peaceful, so loving together, perhaps it was the force of good example."

"I don't think there has been one cross word for a fortnight," says Eleanor laughing. She piles up the silken pillows on the sofa beside her.

"Come and sit here close by me, and we will have a little flirtation, like in the old days. Only you must imagine these brocade flowers are real red field poppies, and this sofa is a haycock, just at the back of Copthorne Farm. I can almost hear the lazy hum of the bees, and smell the fresh mown grass. I am not in a silk tea-jacket, but my old blue cotton frock with the tear in the elbow, you remember I caught it on a nail by the gate. Isn't it fun to make believe like children? We don't often play, do we Philip? You must take my hand very gently, under the hay," pulling the cushion over her wrist. "I draw it away, you see, rather shyly, looking deliciously coy, and say: 'Oh! you mustn't, Mr. Roche.'

"Then you are horribly audacious, and kiss me straight off, you know how you used to. We are silent for a few moments, just holding each others' hands in unspeakable content, the sort of ecstasy that comes before marriage.

"We listen to the birds singing—a thrush keeps repeating my name—they generally seem to say something. I remember one at home that used to sit outside my window and chirp: 'Think of it! think of it! think of it!' till I grew quite angry, always recalling an unpleasant incident. 'I *don't want* to think of it!' I would declare, stamping my foot. Oh! Philip, what a good actor you are! You look frightfully in love."

"I am," he murmurs tenderly, clasping her in his arms.

Eleanor laughs incredulously, and lays her head on his shoulder.

"Listen," she says, disengaging herself from his embrace. "We must not shock Sarah!"

The door is flung open.

"Mr. Quinton."

Eleaner rises slowly, her eyes flash with strange brilliancy; she trembles slightly, flushes, pales!

Her husband sees it in a moment—the rush of colour to her cheeks, and the pallor as her hand meets Carol's.

Philip mutters something inaudible under his breath. The chilly air of winter creeps through the hayfield behind Copthorne Farm—the voices of birds are dead—it is cold, cruel January once more!

A horrible presentiment steals over him, numbing his senses—paralysing his brain. This man seems their evil genius, the red firelight playing on his tall slim figure, transforms him in Philip's eyes to a crimson Mephistopheles. Eleanor pours out a fresh cup of tea, and hands it to Mr. Quinton smilingly, as a moment ago she did to her husband.

She moves the poppy-patterned pillows for the newcomer; he is beside her now on the sofa.

Philip feels left out. A jealous pang shoots through him like the stab of a knife, or the burning of iron red-hot on the flesh. Yet, Eleanor, unconscious of the evil feelings she arouses, takes but little notice of her husband, and hangs upon Carol's words with eager interest, agrees with all he says, prevents him leaving twice when he rises to go, and hopes he will "look in again" soon.

"You *might* have asked him to stay and dine, Philip," she declares, when they are again alone. "He is so chatty and amusing. Why, what are you looking so black about?"

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"I can't bear the fellow," mutters Philip. "I should like to knock him down when he looks at you out of those loathsome eyes, and talks rot enough to make one sick. The worst of it is you *like* him. I shudder for your taste."

"You are prejudiced," replies Eleanor hotly, "you can't bear me to have a friend that is not of your own choosing! My taste wasn't a thing to be shuddered at when I married *you*, was it? A selfish, egotistical——"

"Hush, Eleanor," he says, laying his hands firmly but not unkindly on her shoulders. "Don't let us quarrel, you will be sorry afterwards."

"I don't care *that*" (with a snap of her fingers) "whether we quarrel or not. It is better though to speak out than bottle it up inside. There! now you have got your reproachful look again, like the day you said I was vulgar! Let me go," wriggling herself free.

She stifles a sob, bangs through the door, and runs upstairs whistling. The refrain of the "Miller's" song is wafted down to the hall in Eleanor's clear, rich voice:

I care for nobody, no, not I,
If nobody cares for me.

Philip walks slowly back to the sofa, gazes a moment at the cushions, then buries his face in their midst, grinding his teeth.

CHAPTER VIII.

Kind Hearts are More than Coronets.

Giddy Mounteagle's face is wreathed in smiles as she talks animatedly to Eleanor.

"Yes, my dear," she says triumphantly, "Lady MacDonald comes to me to-morrow. She is one of the smartest women in town and moves in the best circles. She will stay the night and be the belle of my 'At home' the following day. I long to introduce her to you. Such a stately, aristocratic-looking woman, a little 'difficult' sometimes, but usually charming. She takes offence if you introduce her to any one not *quite* up to the mark, and, since her marriage, is very particular whom she knows. I used to see a great deal of her before she was Lady MacDonald, but lately we have drifted apart."

"Is she stuck up?" asks Eleanor bluntly.

"No, that is hardly the word. 'Proud,' shall we say: 'dignified.'"

"Because she has married an old lord? How amusing! I shall like to see her."

"I will bring her to tea with you, Eleanor," replies Mrs. Mounteagle, feeling she is conferring an immense honour on Mrs Roche. "Mind you use that duck of a service, and wear your heliotrope gown. You look so *distingué* in it, and dear Lady MacDonald notices clothes."

"Any more orders?" asks Eleanor laughing.

Giddy's glance sweeps over the room.

"Yes. Remove that awful photograph, the one of the old people outside a farmhouse. It is not ornamental, and quite spoils the beauty of that corner. Lady MacDonald is so critical it might catch her eye."

"Then she will have to sit with her back to it or suffer," replies Eleanor staunchly. "It is my favourite picture, and I don't mean to take it down."

Giddy sighs, puts on a martyred expression, and kicks the footstool.

"Your taste is as terrible as ever," she declares sadly, shaking her head. "What would you have been, Eleanor, if I hadn't taken you in hand?"

"I don't know, dear," she cries, feeling she has been ungrateful. "You have done me no end of good turns! But I love that portrait, it is sentiment."

"An old nurse of yours and her husband?" asks Giddy.

Eleanor flushes rosy red.

She would like to say "my parents," but dreads Giddy's cynical smile. She could not bear to hear them scoffed at, even in their absence.

Instead she murmurs

"That woman nursed me in her arms as a baby, tended me in childhood—loved me always."

Eleanor, on tiptoe, kisses the two faces in the photo.

"They are good," she says, "generous, kind-hearted; they might grace the grandest palace——"

"And smile at the claims of long descent," quotes the widow. "What a true little woman you are, Eleanor! Sometimes I half envy you, *gaucheries* and all!"

"I can't help being stupid, Giddy; I was not born wise, like you."

"Yet you really have developed marvellously under my training. The way you kept up the conversation at that dull luncheon party last week was admirable. I could not have done it better myself. As it was, a wretched sore throat condemned me to silence. How your badinage with Quinton astonished our hostess! She sat up so straight in her chair, I thought her fringe curls would reach the ceiling. She will never invite you there again, but it was simply splendid.

"'What do you think of Mrs. Roche?' I asked her afterwards, when Carol was bending over you in the window seat. She drew in her thin lips and muttered: '*Most* refreshing!' in a tone that meant something very different."

"What did it mean?" cries Eleanor, with a gasp.

"I am in too great a hurry now to interpret," answers Giddy, kissing her effusively. "Ta-ta, beloved—and mind you adopt your best Society airs for Lady MacDonald to-morrow. She will swallow any amount, and may be very useful to us in town. *Comprenez-vous?*"

* * * * *

Eleanor is quite in a flutter the following afternoon. Her room looks bright with flowers purchased that morning

Kisses the faces in the photos.

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"We couldn't help bringing him," says Mr. Grebby.

in the town, her Crown Derby tea-service is set out on a new and dainty cloth, which had been laid by for an occasion. The curtains are drawn to shut away the dreary fog, and fire-light mingles with the rosy rays from a tall lamp. Eleanor is still quite in a tremble lest the oil should smell, as Sarah frequently fails over the art of wick trimming.

"How does my heliotrope go with this chair?" she asks, settling her sleeves, and critically contrasting the yellow brocade furniture with the shade of her gown.

Sarah assures her the effect is most desirable, as she places a pink iced cake by the tray.

"Don't keep Lady MacDonald waiting on the doorstep; you might be in the hall ready to answer the bell."

"Yes, ma'am."

"And if the fog gets denser light the gas outside."

Eleanor draws her chair to the fire, and pretends to read a Society paper, but her thoughts are far from the fashion article.

She is supremely contented with herself and her surroundings. Her hair has its prettiest wave to-day, she is wearing her smartest toilette, and a new pair of bronzed beaded shoes. Her only trial in life at this moment is the propensity shown by her diamond crescent to turn over in its bed of lace, and reveal the back, with a fastening for a hairpin. She fixes it in her fringe at night.

A little tremble of excitement rushes over Eleanor; the bell rings.

Sarah flings open the door, and Giddy Mounteagle sails into the room with Lady MacDonald. Mrs. Roche feels quite small and insignificant under the stranger's patronising smile.

Lady MacDonald raises her long-handled *lorgnette* to scrutinise her surroundings.

Giddy is conscious of the offending photograph. Eleanor draws forward the largest chair. Lady MacDonald sinks gracefully back among the cushions, her head poised on one side—she always holds it so. Some admirer once told her it was like a flower bending on its stem with the weight of its own beauty.

"Oh! the fog outside," she cries, with an affected little

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cough, first cousin to a sigh. "I suppose it rises from the river."

"Yes, and creeps into your soul, and clogs your brain," adds Giddy, "the yellow land of mist is not attractive."

"No one will turn up at your party to-morrow," says Eleanor, "if it doesn't lift."

"I never thought of that. The professionals will be stuck on the line, perhaps, and we shall have a songless, tuneless, 'musical,' with only locals to eat our cakes."

"My husband has promised to fetch me to-morrow; I must be back in town by seven, for two or three evening engagements," says Lady MacDonald.

"Then I am glad mine is an afternoon," murmurs Giddy, "or I should not have secured you. It is delightful of dear Lord MacDonald to drive down."

"Oh! he always does what I tell him," she replies, with a superior smile.

She has a quantity of jingling golden ornaments hanging from a chatelaine at her waist, a gold crown on the handle of her *lorgnette*, and so many rings on her long pink fingers that they bulge over her knuckles. Her nails are manicured to appear almost crimson, her teeth are shining white under her curved lips, that look capable of bitter sayings and smiles of scorn.

"The fire is too hot," she says, laying one soft hand against a still softer cheek. Her complexion is a marvel. Eleanor hands her a painted screen.

"What a charming picture," continues Lady MacDonald. "I adore nymphs. Did you paint this, Mrs. Roche?"

"Yes," replied Giddy, "Eleanor is a perfect artist."

Eleanor raises her eyebrows, staring at Giddy in amazement, never having touched a brush in her life.

"Do you exhibit?"

Giddy again answers for Eleanor.

"Mr. Roche won't let her, he thinks any publicity *infra dig* for a woman."

"Perhaps he is right," says Lady MacDonald; "I know Edward won't allow me to pen a line for the press, though I have quite a genius for scribbling. He is so mad because people get my picture sometimes for the Society papers. I have to hide them away from him. The last one caught his eye hung up on a bookstall, and he was nearly suffocated with wrath on the spot, and could not speak for three minutes."

"The penalty of beauty," cries Giddy gaily.

"Are you one of the types of English beauty?" asks Eleanor.

"Oh! no. Nothing so common. I leave that to Irish belles, and ladies of the ballet."

She raises her delicate chin, and rests her languid eyes on Mrs. Roche.

The door opens, and Sarah's voice announces:

"Mr. and Mrs. Grebby!"

Eleanor starts to her feet, and rushes forward.

"Father! Mother!"

There they stand. Mrs. Grebby in a black satin gown, a long gold chain suspended round her neck, a Paisley shawl crossed over her chest, and a close bonnet of quilted blue satin.

Mr. Grebby, with a sparse frill of grey hair growing right round his face, his chin and long upper lip guiltless of hirsute appendages. A gorgeous suit of a very baggy cut, flowered satin waistcoat, and a basket of apples and cooking pears in his hand, as a present to his daughter.

At his heels a shaggy dog, blind in one eye and toothless—one that in its puppyhood had leaped and played with Eleanor in the green fields of Copthorne Farm.

A cry of delight breaks from her, as she hugs her parents in turn, and catches sight of her old favourite.

"Rover—my darling!" she exclaims, sinking on her knees to fondle the dog.

He springs up with his muddy feet on the shoulders of her beautiful heliotrope dress. His claws catch in the lace, but she heeds them not, only laughs gleefully as he licks her face.

"We couldn't help bringing him," says Mr. Grebby, wiping his brow with a red handkerchief, which is shining and damp from excitement. "Poor fellow, he *did* want to come! Black Bess will miss him, won't she?"

"We took it into our heads sudden like to visit London and surprise you, dearie," Mrs. Grebby vouchsafes.

"How lovely of you!" cries Eleanor, in her joy forgetting the guests by the fire, then she turns and faces them.

Giddy feels as *if* cold water is coursing down her back, the palms of her hands are icy cold. The feathers in her friend's hat seem dancing up and down before her eyes.

Lady MacDonald is positively glaring through her tortoiseshell glasses.

There is an air of offended dignity in her mien, as she looks the couple up and down freezingly.

"This is my father and mother," says Eleanor, an elated smile upon her lips, a merry sparkle in her eyes. What do these people matter, now that her parents have come to her new home? She longs to show them everything, and watch their wonder.

"Mr. and Mrs. Grebby, Lady MacDonald, Mrs. Mounteagle," she continues. "Now, Ma dear, you sit here," pulling up a chair between Giddy and Lady MacDonald. "Loosen your shawl, or you'll scorch, and I will give you some tea."

Mrs. Grebby gazes in awestruck wonder at the grandly dressed visitors, and her daughter's elaborate clothes.

Mr. Grebby stumps round the room, remarking on everything.

Mr. Grebby stumps round the room, remarking on everything.

"Well there! What do you say to *that* for a picture," addressing his wife. "Tell Ma to come here, Eleanor, I want 'er to see this 'orse, and the lady on the moon in the next frame. I wish you could paint pictures, my girl, but maybe Mr. Roche will 'ave you taught."

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Giddy flushes scarlet. Lady MacDonald fans herself violently with the screen. Mrs. Grebby takes the tiny cup Eleanor hands her, and turns it round to examine it. Then her eyes fall on the slices of thin bread and butter, the dainty biscuits, and minute squares of buttered toast.

"Don't you get 'ungry, dearie?" she asks. "I thought you'd be sure to 'ave a knife-and-fork tea, living in this style."

Her daughter laughs heartily. A wicked desire to shock Lady Macdonald, as Giddy has so often excited her to do on previous occasions, seizes Eleanor.

"Oh, *no*, Ma! We have big dinners at eight o'clock. Five courses and serviettes. You ask Lady MacDonald!"

"I don't call this a cup," declares Mr. Grebby, grinning broadly as Eleanor hands him his tea. "It's more like an acorn!" He takes half-a-dozen slices of bread and butter and munches them hungrily.

"I'm a bit peckish, my girl," he says. "But then we've had a long day, and fastin' don't agree with me! We went to the Tower, Madame Tussaud's, and the Exhibition of Tortures in Leicester Square. We liked that best of all."

"But what did you do with Rover?" asks Eleanor, exciting the dog to jump on the sofa and patting his wet nose.

"We left him at Cousin Harriet's. We can stay the night here with you, and after that we are going to put up a bit at her lodging-house in Bloomsbury. Ma was set on bringing old Rover to see you, as we think he won't last long now."

"The dear fellow!" murmurs Eleanor, cutting the pink cake. "Some more tea, Lady MacDonald?"

"*No* thank you," and the severity of the tone startles Eleanor.

She fears she has committed some deadly offence in offering this proud beauty a second cup. Never was there a more grotesque tea-party on the terrace than in Eleanor's boudoir that afternoon. Giddy with deepest shame, resentment and horror, raging in her heart. Lady MacDonald haughty and disdainful, eyeing the homely couple as she would the beasts at the Zoo. Mrs. Grebby, speechless in admiring silence, fingering the frills of the sofa cushions, and taking in the pattern of the wall-paper, her breast swelling with pride and gratification. Mr. Grebby, his large boots on the brightly polished fender, his red face wreathed in smiles, as bucolic a specimen of manhood as Copthorne could produce.

Lastly, Eleanor, looking perfectly fairy-like under the red lamp, caressing the old dog with her slim white hands, and talking first to one guest, then to the other, with supreme good nature, her father's basket of apples on her knee.

"I must send some of these pears in to you, Giddy," she says, "I can't spare the apples, but your cook may like to stew——"

She pauses, reading her friend's expression of disdain.

She stammers something unintelligible to hide her confusion, wondering what she has said to offend, and changing the subject, asks hesitatingly:

"Did—er did you put me up for the 'Butterflies?'"

Mrs. Mounteagle had only that morning requested Lady MacDonald to second Eleanor.

Now she grows crimson at the thought, for Lady MacDonald is her trump card in the club.

"Thinking it over," replies Giddy. "I am quite sure Mr. Roche won't approve of us poor little Butterflies. He will imagine that a club must necessarily be emancipated, that it will lead you into latchkey habits, and advance your ideas too rapidly. I should advise you to stay at home, my dear, and" (with a cynical little smile) "stew your pears."

Mrs. Grebby has drawn the parish magazine from the recesses of an enormous pocket in her petticoat, and hands it to her daughter.

"I thought you'd like to read the news," she says. "Mrs. King's baby was christened last Sunday, and the little Browns have spread the measles in the schools."

Lady MacDonald and Giddy exchange glances that palpably say: "Why don't we go?"

The fact is Mrs. Mounteagle has been rooted to the spot, paralysed as it were by a sense of shame and humiliation.

Lady MacDonald has watched the scene as at a play, a comedy in low-life, acted for the benefit of the stalls and boxes.

"We really must go," murmurs Giddy hastily, catching her breath. She rises, gathering up a long feather boa to wind round her neck.

Lady MacDonald follows her example, her jingling chatelaine clanks irritatingly, as if protesting at being found in such company.

She draws on a light kid glove, proffering Eleanor her finger-tips.

"*Good*-bye, Mrs. Roche," she drawls. "I have so enjoyed a peep at your little *coterie* to-day, but we really *must* not intrude ourselves upon you longer, you will have so many *home* topics to discuss."

Mrs. Mounteagle refrains from her customary caress, whereat Eleanor remarks:

"How pale you look, Giddy! Are you ill?"

"Yes," she replies, under her breath, "I have over-eaten myself—overdone with APPLES!"

(*To be continued.*)

A TEN-POUND PRIZE.

(See Next Page.)

On the next page is a puzzle picture composed of 88 squares. If these squares be rearranged in a certain order they will form a real picture.

We offer a prize of £10 to the first person who sends the correct solution. In order to give readers in all parts of the United Kingdom as equal a chance as possible, the whole of the solutions received at 17, Henrietta Street in any one day will be considered together. In the very unlikely chance of two or more correct solutions being included in one day's post, the prize will be given to the sender of the *neatest* one. Consolation Prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

If no correct solution be received on or before Tuesday, March 3rd, 1896, the Ten-Pound Prize will be given to the sender of the solution then to hand which is most nearly correct.

Pictures should be packed flat or folded, not rolled, and the outside wrapper must be marked "March."

N.B.—To make the puzzle more difficult some of the squares have been turned upside down.

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A Mother of Mexico.

"MAMACITA," cried Blaso Aldana, coming across the *patio* with old Dolores, her sometime nurse and present maid, shuffling at her heels; "mamacita! The Saenz were robbed last night. The door of the *sala* was broken in and the house ransacked. Lupe's pearls are gone, with all the silver cups, and spoons, and ladles, and Julio's suit that cost three hundred dollars, and, oh! a *lot* of money Don Lauro had in his chest."

Cleofas Mora, widow of Aldana, shook her head in silent comment. She had heard all too much in the last few weeks of the depredations committed by the lawless gentry who had just begun to work their way up to Chihuahua from the States below.

"And, mamma," said Blasita, "Lupe Saenz says that Lorenzo Garcia has been walking past her window every night this week, and she is quite sure he cares more for her than for Augustina."

"*Chismes!*" then answered Cleofas Mora. "Why do you retail gossip? Have I not heart and hands full already, that you should come babbling of Guadalupe Saenz and her flirtations? I thank the saints that my Augustina is a prudent child, who does not take up with every young blade that appears on the Alameda. Who is this Lorenzo Garcia?—whence comes he?—to whom does he bring letters? In my young days we knew who a man might be before we owned he watched under our windows. A pretty pass we are coming to."

Now, truth to tell, Doña Cleofas was, on the average, little of a scold; but to-day she was sore distraught. She was the fortunate possessor of means, moderate enough to be sure, but still adequate for her needs, and she and hers were gifted with sound minds and bodies. But at the present moment she was much exercised in spirit, and over the very two matters on which Blasita had touched so glibly.

There was no doubt that Lorenzo Garcia had been making tentative advances towards the house of Aldana. And there was equal certainty that Augustina was rather kindly disposed to hearken to the voice of the charmer, coyly as yet, it was true, and not to a compromising degree; but Doña Cleofas foresaw a lively contest for the day when the girl should definitely decide for her quasi admirer, for Augustina was endowed with some tenacity of purpose.

Lorenzo Garcia was a stranger in Chihuahua, for whom none could vouch, and, for all his handsome eyes and suave address, Doña Cleofas had no notion of passing over to his control one-third of the snug little sum she had laid by as dowry for her daughters. Now, too, Doña Cleofas had another source of disturbance, which she would by no means impart to her household, composed exclusively of women as it was. In the silent hours of the preceding night she had heard clearly and distinctly the sound of feet moving cautiously in the little court of her domicile, and her big watch-dog Pinto had been found stiff and dead that morning, although none save herself had thought of the cause she confidently assigned for his demise.

So far as appeared, there was no protection to be had. The Aldana abode was rather isolated, and the very peculiarities of architectural form which render a Mexican house almost like a fortress to outside attack, virtually cut off communication with and assistance from the outside world, once the foe has gained foothold within the gates. In those days the police force of Chihuahua, now admirably organised, was insignificant both as to numerical strength and effectiveness. Then Doña Cleofas, imbued with the spirit of woman's subjugation and social passivity of her race and day, felt that she could call on no man of her acquaintance for succour or protection. There was nothing to do but await the course of events.

The day went on, slowly enough, perhaps, to Augustina, before whose eyes the form of Lorenzo appeared not, but all too swiftly to her mother, enduring a sort of breathless apprehension. Night fell, and the little family, shut inside their four walls, passed the long winter evening as best they might. At bed-time Doña Cleofas called her people together, and, to their surprise and against their protests, marshalled them away to a great room, a guest-chamber rarely used, which lay at the rear of the house, towards the kitchens, and which was strongly defended, having no windows, but only heavy oaken doors. These Doña Cleofas locked and barred securely, and mustered her flock together.

"Hush, Blasa! and you, too, Augustina. But look you at Eduarda, the youngest of you all—how silently she obeys, while you set up a clamour. Why do I bring you here? Because I will so, then. How now! Am I no longer mistress in my own abode? Here are three beds with ample pillows—get you to rest. And you, Beata, Hermelinda, and Dolores"—to the sewing-women—"spread out your blankets here on the floor, near the *ninas*, and let me hear not so much as a chirp from one of you till I call you in the morning."

Thus, disguising her tenderness and anxious fears with severe speech, like many a woman of greater lore before her, Doña Cleofas summarily locked the one remaining door from the outside and marched away alone. She was confident that if trouble were imminent, it would come in the direction of the little shop that was her source of income, where was a respectable stock of goods of worth, portable, besides her strong box itself—no patent money-safes being obtainable in Chihuahua.

Thither, then, to the store-room behind the shop did Doña Cleofas wend her way, and near by its weak point, a small door, opening on the *patio*, she seated herself in a great arm-chair of willow-work, and for a brief time gave herself up to the luxury of weeping. For, with all her force and decision of character, Doña Cleofas was but a woman, and it might be on the cards that she should gaze not on the faces of her children again.

She had brought her arsenal with her; no cunning fabrication of Colt's, nor many-balled Winchester; for these inventions of murderous man, to maim and slay his fellows, Doña Cleofas had not the slightest use; she was the traditional woman in her horror of firearms, and would not have known how to make offensive use of them, unless as missiles to be hurled against an intruder's head. But alongside her, and resting against her knee, lay a heavy long-helved axe, whose keen, broad edge had never been turned against knot of

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stubborn oak nor the gnarled roots that serve as fuel thereabouts. And Doña Cleofas had all faith in the power of her own right arm to wield it hard and well against a foe.

The night went on, the silence was unbroken, and Doña Cleofas slept—slept hard and fast until, all at once, with a start, she was as wide awake as ever she was in her life, and realising that very close to her the throat of a man was emitting laboured yet rapid breathings. The auditory sense was strong and definite in Doña Cleofas, and it took her not many seconds to decide that the intruder had crawled through an opening cut in the panel of the door before her, and there he was, apparently caught fast, sprawling, clawing, and wriggling to force himself farther in and clear of the opening. Now and then, in the fellow's contortions, his hot breath swept the hand of the watcher.

Doña Cleofas drew a deep, soundless breath, and, rising swiftly, noiselessly to her feet, raised the axe in the air. Swift as light it fell—*chack!* One mighty, convulsive writhe, and the man with that last twisting shudder had drawn himself past the grip of the ragged planks, and Doña Cleofas, stooping resolutely, drew him quite within with as natural a movement as her quivering nerves could compass.

A few moments of silence; then, barely audible, a sibilant whisper: "Thou, Lencho, is all well?" Through the hollowed hands of Doña Cleofas an answer was sent back: "All well—come on!" Then, almost breath for breath, that same scene, unviewed in the great darkness, was enacted, and yet again.

But the third time, what with the strain on her over-wrought nerves, and the tax on her aching muscles, as she dragged aside three well-grown bodies—the third time, and little wonder Doña Cleofas could not answer the question: "Art safely in? Does all go well?" But the fourth man, cautiously putting his head within the gap to reconnoitre just missed the blow of the heavy axe.

Staying the steps of a tottering woman.

"*Por Dios!* but what was that? Some treachery is here," his voice broke forth. "And—the earth beneath the door is wet—with something slippery—hot—good Heavens—*with blood!*" There was a smothered howl of rage and fear, the rush of scuffling feet, a ladder rattling against the wall, as it was drawn up to the roof, and Doña Cleofas was alone, but for the dead.

The dawn had not yet opened into day when a watchman, staying the steps of a tottering woman, knocked at the great *zaguan* door of the *Jefe Politico's* house, and, after a parley with the servant on duty and his summons to the master, the prefect came forth, looking curiously at the pale, haggard face of his early guest.

"But what is this, good Doña Cleofas? I cannot credit the tale, and yet your blood-stained hands and garb—well, well! You go not hence on foot, nor fasting. After so sore a struggle you must want strength. Come in and sit you down while coffee and wine are brought to us, and the horses are put to my coach."

But if the good woman had seemed faint and ill when she sought the aid of the prefect, she had well-nigh quite recovered her wonted calm and self-reliance when she stood, an hour later, beside that dignitary and watched his wondering face, while he stripped the black masks from the faces of the dead.

"This is 'El Zorro,' the Fox," he murmured, consulting a formidable-looking paper adorned with great red seals; "that is to say, he corresponds in every particular with the description of that bandit sent up for my instruction by my esteemed colleague, the *Jefe* of Zacatecas. This bearded one must be—yes—the Tarantula; and this one—I seem to know his face."

"No doubt," said Doña Cleofas drily; "with the name of Lorenzo Garcia, he has been playing the gallant to such of our girls as would hear him, and, no doubt, getting from them the points to use in his raids. Faith, one of my own pullets has listened to his purr! Señor Jefe, if I have done aught that merits praise, I pray your licence to go and bring the girl, to whom, perhaps your grace will say a word. A hard test for her?—an awful sight? 'Tis so, your worship; but the chit needs the lesson. What might it not have been for her mother?"

All ignorant of what was going on, the rest of Doña Cleofas's flock thought it hard she should forbid them to follow Tina; but so the dame decrees, and locked them fast again, all breakfastless, pending the place was freed from its ghastly sights. And never, in Augustina's life to come, would she forget the awful scene, as she came to where the three stark dead men lay, drawn by her mother's hand.

"Santo Cristo!" she cried; "what is it?—what does it mean?"

"It means, my child," the *Jefe* hastened to answer, "that your ready acceptance of the attentions of a stranger might have brought ruin and death upon your house. As it is, your good wise mother has averted the danger, and even has added to your dowry, since to her accrue the fifteen hundred good, hard dollars offered by the paternal government for these three robbers she has killed, the leaders of an infamous band. Yes," he answered her piteous look; "yes, even this handsome Lencho, who was the decoy, the traitor, the spy, the worst of all the lot. What! Catch her! she is fainting! Ah, well, in truth he is, or was, a handsome scamp. Your axe has marred his beauty, good Cleofas!"

The family Aldana still live in Chihuahua. The daughters all are married, and the unwritten history of the city, noted for its obedient, discreet maidens, places foremost in the rank of good daughters, the three of Doña Cleofas, and most submissive and dutiful of them all, Augustina.

Y. H. Addis.

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ON Saturday, December 5th, 1880, I sailed from Liverpool to New York in the Cunard liner Gallia, then a comparatively new boat. It was certainly not the best time of year to choose for an ocean voyage; but it was not a matter of choice with me. In my capacity as special Queen's messenger I was obliged to take out to the embassy at Washington some official documents of an urgent character, but as regards the nature of which I can say no more. No time was to be lost, and on the Friday night preceding, when just sitting down to dinner with a couple of friends whom I had asked to join me in the discussion of a brace of pheasants from my eldest brother's well-stocked preserves, I was summoned post-haste to the Foreign Office.

Leaving my wife to do the honours alone, I bade good-bye to her and my comfortable warm dining-room, and took the first train up to town, getting my papers and instructions and going on to Liverpool by the midnight express from St. Pancras. It can be imagined that my preparations for a sea voyage were not on a very extensive scale. But Queen's messengers for foreign service are used to that sort of thing. I don't count the eight home service chaps who for two hundred a year make daily trips by special train up to Balmoral, or down to Windsor, or Osborne, and back, with a dispatch-box full of papers with which to beguile the time of Her Most Gracious Majesty, and bring home to the nation that she works for a living. These fellows have an easy time of it.

But we foreigners—there were twelve of us always ready, if not willing, to start off to Brazil or Siberia at an hour's notice. But we get four hundred pounds a year, with an allowance of one pound a day and travelling expenses when away from home, which is not to be sneezed at in these days when lots of fellows from Oxford and Cambridge are glad enough to go out as under-gatekeepers. Still one isn't apt to think of that when compelled to go away on a sudden for thousands of miles at such a time of year.

As we dropped down the Mersey and headed down channel in a chilly, drizzling rain, I didn't know a soul on board. My mission was of a sufficiently secret character (how little the general world knows of what diplomacy is doing for its good!) to make it expedient that my identity should be unknown to even the officers of the ship; otherwise I should have been duly accredited to Captain Hains and have fared like a prince. I went into the saloon and sat down to write up my diary notes in my pocket-book.

In looking over the papers in the pockets I came on a bill from a ready-money shop in London, where my wife had bought some new drawing-room curtains, and which had been sent down by post that morning. In the sudden hurry of my coming away I had forgotten all about it. It wouldn't keep till I came back, and I didn't want my wife bothered with it. What was I to do? The bill was for a few shillings under five pounds. I looked over my money, and, as good luck would have it, found a five-pound note which I hadn't changed into American money. I would send that, and they could send the change and receipt to my wife.

Getting a sheet of my ship's notepaper and a couple of envelopes from the saloon steward, I wrote a few lines explaining, inclosed the bill and note, first entering, as was my custom, the number 76-1, 28396, in my pocket-book, fastened up the envelope, addressed it, stuck my last English stamp on it, and put it back in my pocket-book, preparatory to posting it at Queenstown.

The ship wasn't full. Transatlantic steamers seldom are at that time of year, either with passengers or cargo, so that the first day's dinner as we rounded Holyhead, and the next morning's breakfast as we lay at Queenstown waiting for the mails, were sufficient for the completion of the mental catalogue, which, when on a sea voyage, I invariably make of my travelling companions. With the exception of two men, whose acquaintance I subsequently made, there were none who could be classed as out of the common run of men and women as they go.

One of these two was named Kimball—Professor Kimball, as I found upon inspection of the printed list which the Cunard company so unlimitedly and gratuitously bestow upon each passenger—and the way we made acquaintance was thus: He was my next door neighbour at meals, and our acquaintance began by the usual formula: "First voyage, sir?"

After that we were good friends whenever we met. He was a man of about fifty, I should say, with a foreign air, and pompous manner. In his buttonhole he wore the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour. As for the other man, he came up to me when I was sitting alone in the smoking-room while we lay at Queenstown, and while Divine service was going on in the saloon, asked if I read at sea, and offered to lend me a book.

"My name is Jervise," he said. "Oh, you won't find it in the list. You needn't look. I only took my passage the day the ship sailed, and they hadn't time to print it."

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I thought this strange, as I had done the same, yet my name was in.

"Here is my card, if you doubt it, sir," he went on in rather a hurt tone, as he fumbled in his pocket. "I haven't got one, but I will give you one again."

I told him it didn't matter in the least, and he continued, with a pleased smile: "But to return to the books. I know there's a library on board, but everyone knows what a ship's library is—'Robinson Crusoe,' the 'Swiss Family Robinson.' There's sure to be a Robinson somewhere." I laughed, and told him I had the honour of possessing the name of Robinson myself, whereat he coloured slightly, and said: "No offence, I hope, sir." I told him not the least, and he went on again: "Now I've laid in a good stock of recent novels—just the sort of light reading for a sea-voyage like this. I'll show them to you if you come down in my cabin. Come along now."

I bade good-bye to my wife.

He conducted me to one of the best state-rooms in the ship—an outside one—and well forward of the saloon and machinery. I was surprised at this, and told him so.

"I thought you said you only took your passage yesterday?" I said.

"That's just where it is," he replied; "these good rooms are always kept back at this season, and the inferior ones sold first. There were only good ones left when I applied. See?" and he laughed at the cleverness of it. I confess I didn't see, but didn't tell him so. I thought I'd find out from someone who knew better how these matters were managed.

He showed me all his books—a varied assortment of novels principally, with here and there a work on magic and sleight-of-hand. "The Memoirs of Robert Houdin" was one of them, I remember. We chatted along pleasantly for half-an-hour, smoking cigarettes with the door shut and port open, which—the ship not being under way—the steward hadn't fastened.

"You seem to take a considerable interest in this sort of thing," I said, picking up a magician book.

"Well, yes, I do," he answered; "I have for some years. Indeed, in a small way, I've gone in for amateur conjuring, and have taken lessons from no less than—" he said some name that I couldn't catch. "I find a good deal of amusement in it. I will give you a few 'sleights' to show you what an amateur can do."

I told him I should only be too glad, and thereupon went through a short series of sleight-of-hand tricks, such as vanishing coins, passing two into one, and crushing a lemon through the top of his portmanteau, afterwards picking it out of my hair—very simple, commonplace ones as he claimed, being only "palming," as he called it, but at the same time very cleverly and neatly performed.

"By Jove!" said I, "you ought to go on the stage. No one could do better than that."

"I did think of it once," he said, in a curiously gloomy tone, but brightening up the next instant. "Oh, those are not anything. I wish I could show you something really worth notice. Let me see. Yes, I might do that one. Wait a moment." He went to a small black leather bag, such as London city men carry, and unlocking it, looked it well over. "No, I am sorry to say, I haven't one. I thought I had. It's too bad, for it's an awfully pretty trick."

I asked him what he wanted, thinking it might be some article common to Transatlantic passengers.

"It's only a five-pound note. But never mind. I'll try something else."

I am sure I wish I had let him; but I gave my pocket-book a look through. I found nothing but circular notes upon Coutts & Co, a few American five-dollar pieces, and some loose silver.

"I thought I had a five-pound note," I said, and then remembered the letter. "Stay. I think I can find one, but I'm afraid it is fastened up." I took the letter out of its compartment, and found in doing so the unused envelope I had put in with it. "It's all right, though, for I can put it up again in this." I tore open the letter and took out the five-pound note and handed it to him. He took it and crumpled it up quickly in his fingers, shut his hand an instant and opened it again. The note was gone. My face must have shown the concern I felt, for he said:

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"Any letters, sir? Mail-bag just going."

"Oh, don't be alarmed. It's safe enough now," drawing it out as if from his skull-cap, and smoothing it out between his hands; "but we'll give it another test." He struck a match along his leg, and, putting the edge of the note into the flame before I could stay his arm, it flared up as though soaked in turpentine, and fell in curled-up ashes on the floor.

"I say!" I exclaimed, quite carried away by the dexterous deception, "you have no right to do that."

He laughed a merry laugh.

"No harm I assure you." He put his fingers into the watch-pocket of my waistcoat—a pocket I never use, by-the-bye—drew out the note, and handed it to me.

"There's your note safe and sound," he said, "and I should advise you to put it up again in your letter as quick as you can—not through fear of its ultimate destruction at my hands, but there goes the bell of the tender, and you've no time to lose if you wish to post it in the ship's bag."

"It's the most wonderful trick I ever saw!" I went on, still lost in amazement and admiration at the simplicity of the trick. At that moment one of the stewards approached the door.

"Any letters, sir? Mail-bag just going."

"Yes, stop a moment. Here's one." I hastily folded up the note and thrust it into the fresh envelope with the bill and letter, licked the flap and smoothed it down, turning the letter over in doing so. "By Jove! I have forgotten the address, and I've no pen and ink."

"Here's an indelible pencil," said Jervise, "it will do as well."

I took the pencil and wrote down the address as quickly as possible, and then discovered I had no stamp.

"Botheration!" I said, trying to get the one off the old envelope. "I can't without tearing it."

"Oh, here's a stamp, too," said Jervise, quietly taking one out of his pocket-book. "It's all my fault, so it's only right I should stand some of the consequences."

I stuck the stamp on, and rushed up to the purser's office myself, not wishing to trust it to the steward after his seeing the note put in it. I was just in time, and dropped it in as the purser was in the act of locking the bag. I went back to Jervise's room, intending to pay him for the stamp, and in the hope of seeing some more tricks. He had gone. Presuming he had gone up on deck, as the steamer was getting under way, I went up there. But I could see him nowhere. Presently the gong sounded for luncheon—rather late, owing to the delay of the mails—and I went down. The Professor was there before me.

"Well, sir," he said, "been ashore, I suppose? I haven't seen you all the morning."

"No," I told him; "I've been down below, in a friend's room—at least an acquaintance, I made on board—and he's been doing some most wonderful tricks."

"Tricks?" he said, knitting his brow; "tricks, sir?"

"Why, conjuring tricks."

The Professor drew himself up quickly, and put down his knife and fork with a very visible start.

"Conjuring tricks?" he repeated; "and who, pray, sir, is there on board this ship who can do conjuring tricks? Perhaps you may not be aware, sir, that the art of necromancy, legerdemain, sleight-of-hand, prestidigitation, or whatever else you may choose to call the profession of magic, is my business, sir. I am now going out to a series of engagements in the States. My stage name is De Ville—suggestive and French, both most necessary in these days, sir," and he smiled.

The name seemed familiar. It seemed as though I had heard it before quite lately.

"Tell me, sir, who is this person who is thus——"

"Only a young man," I said; "only an amateur. Yet he did one remarkably clever trick right under my nose," and I told him about the five-pound note.

"My trick, sir! my invention!" he exclaimed.

"There's only one other person who knows—or, rather, knew—that trick, and I taught it to him, and he——"

"Beef or turkey?" interrupted the steward behind.

"Beef, please. And who may this young man be?"

I described Jervise as best I could. The Professor wheeled round his chair and looked at me severely.

"Come, sir, I see you know more about me than I thought. But that is no subject for joking, I think."

"Joking?" I said; "my dear sir, I'm not joking."

He had begun eating again, and said with a mouth half-full:

"I dare say you will tell me what the young man's name is——"

"Jervise," I interrupted.

The Professor dropped his knife and fork again, with a clatter, but quickly recovered himself.

"Now I know you are making this thing up, sir. But, as I said before, you have selected rather a cruel and heartless topic.

"Of course, you have heard, for it was this very ship," and he went on eating again. "It can't be a resemblance—leaving out the similarity of name—for I have no such person on board, and I think I know the face of every soul in the ship. Memory is part of my business, sir."

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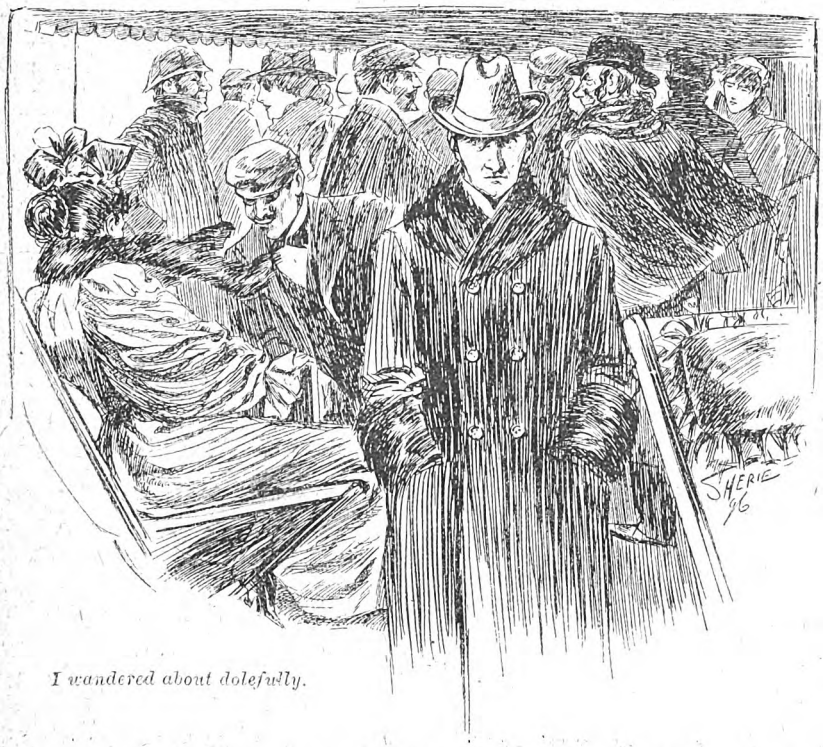
"Well, all I know is that I've been down in this man's room this morning, and saw the trick I told you of," I said, somewhat nettled at his manner and words. "I can tell you the number of the room, for I noticed it particularly, owing to the numerical sequence of the figures. It is 123."

"My room!" shouted the Professor. "Oh, ho—ho! Now I know you are humbugging. You've overdone it, sir. Suppose we drop the subject," and he gave me a withering scowl.

"Ah, captain," turning to Captain Hains, who at that moment came down and took his seat at the head of the table, "so we are now breasting the broad billows of the stormy ocean. Excuse me, sir; no more on that subject," as I made an effort to renew our conversation.

To a tender sailor like myself, the motion of the ship had become already rather trying. Annoyed at what I considered the Professor's rudeness, and feeling decidedly more uncomfortable every minute, I soon joined the small army of hasty departures from the different tables, and, postponing further talk with the Professor until we met again, went down to my berth. We had a succession of gales and storms after that and I kept my berth throughout, now and then making an effort to gain the deck, but never having one essay crowned with success.



I wandered about dolefully.

I saw nothing of either Jervise or Kimball. I took it for granted they were both ill, like myself, especially the former, for I didn't expect the latter, even if well, would get over his huff soon. I didn't trouble my head much about the Professor's remarkable behaviour at the luncheon table. It was some mistake of his exaggerated into a mountain by his vanity and annoyance at having anyone trespass on what he considered his exclusive preserves. During and after a week's *régime* of *mal de mer* one doesn't trouble oneself much about anything. I could hear nothing of either of the two men from my steward, whose "beat" didn't extend to the forward cabins.

My first appearance on deck, or indeed at a meal, was on the morning we got into New York for the first time, "weather permitting." It was clear and cold, and the sea smoothing down every minute as we approached Sandy Hook, and as I went up on deck I experienced that feeling which I dare say many another ocean traveller has felt after a long term below—viz., a sense of strangeness, as though I had just come on board.

No one seemed to know me or recognise me. I looked about for Jervise and Kimball, but could see neither. I knew no one I could ask about them, so I wandered about dolefully while everyone round me stood or sat in cliques and sets, laughing and joking in high spirits at the thoughts of landing. At length the luncheon-gong sounded for the last time, and in the hope that I might find the Professor, more than through any desire to eat, I went down to the table. Yes, there he sat, chatting away like old friends with everyone within his reach. It was some minutes before he noticed me.

"Well, I declare," he said, with his hands up in feigned surprise; "your face seems familiar. Ah, yes; you are the gentleman who used to sit next to me. Mr. Robinson, I believe. Glad to see you back again, sir, though it is but for one meal."

I bowed and thanked him, though inwardly vexed at his quizzing, which had brought the notice of a dozen grinning faces upon me. I wanted to get on the old subject, too, and didn't exactly know how. I didn't like to leave myself open to what he might choose to say before all these people, in whose eyes I had already assumed the preliminary proportions of a butt. At last, just as the Professor rolled up his napkin and drank a glass of ice-water, I ventured to remark to him:

"Oh, by-the-bye, Professor, have you discovered Jervise yet?"

He turned pale, and his lips and cheeks swelled out with the suppressed anger that glittered beneath his shaggy eyebrows.

"Not another word, sir, on that subject," and he brought his fist down on the table with a thump. "I won't have it, sir. If you wish to talk to me you must choose some other."

He rose and strode away. I felt like a fool; not only on account of the direct shutting-up, but because so many people had seen it and were still exchanging glances. I left the table as soon as I could.

Everyone who has crossed the ocean knows what the turmoil and bustle are as the steamer makes her way up New York harbour. The noise, the confusion, the tipping of stewards, the collection of one's traps, and the interchange of good-byes among people who had in a

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week grown to know each other better than twenty years' acquaintance on shore would have enabled them to do—all, everything forbade my ascertaining anything more, from either observation or inquiry. Besides, my own business demanded my earliest departure for Washington, and to the achievement of that end I devoted my attention exclusively.

One thing: I saw no more of Jervise. I had thought of running down to his cabin, but feared to encounter the Professor, whose cabin I concluded must be near by. So I got ashore and through the custom-house as fast as I could, and within two hours was sitting comfortably in a Pullman, whirling down over the Baltimore and Ohio to Washington.

I had been there a fortnight, and, having fulfilled the mission upon which I had been sent, was only waiting for letters I expected from home before I took my departure. The English mail arrived, and among other letters was one from my wife, inclosing a blue enveloped one with "On Her Majesty's Service" on it.

Thinking it was only some formal notification from the Foreign Office, I was about to put it back in my wife's letter, when my eye caught, "Returned Letter," I opened it. Inside was a plain white envelope with the Cunard Company's coat-of-arms embossed on the flap. On the back was neither address nor stamp, though the postmark was "Queenstown, Dec. 6." What could it mean? I was puzzled. The envelope had, of course, been opened at the Returned Letter Office to find my name and address. I took out the contents.

It was my letter which I had posted at Queenstown with the five-pound note. But deuce the bit of a five-pound note was there in it. Instead was a polite missive from the chief clerk, whose ironical tone rather spoiled its official civility, advising me in future to "put whatever money I might wish to send by post *in* the envelope, which should be addressed, and stamped, and registered, in order to insure its safe arrival at its destination."

Here was a pretty state of affairs. For a moment I was in a safe state of perplexity bordering on coma. But I pulled myself together, and tried to unravel it all. Yes, there was the letter, and Marshall and Snelgrove's bill, and there was the envelope I had put them into. But where was the address I had written, the stamp I had stuck on, and the five-pound note I had inclosed? All three were gone—gone!

At first I suspected the post-office people. But suspicion vanished into thin air as I thought about it. They couldn't have removed the writing, which had been written with an indelible pencil (what a mockery that word seemed!) or taken off the stamp without showing some sign of roughness on the surface, and there was none. Then, too, there was the postmark complete. None was lacking by the removal of the stamp. Besides, what would have been the use? Why not, if they meant to steal, and did steal the money, why not have destroyed the letter altogether?

Oh, no, it was *not* the post-office people. That was clear enough. Who then? Jervise! Yes, it was another trick of his. Rather a costly trick to me. He had got possession of the note which I fancied I had put in the letter. It was a magician's pencil he had given me to write the address with—whose writing faded in a few minutes. Could there be a doubt of it? That was why he had kept out of my way afterwards, and what the Professor meant——"What? Eh? By Jove!" I shouted. "I believe the Professor knew more about it than he let on. I bet he and Jervise are confederates. Of course, that is why he wouldn't talk about him. What a fool I have been! But how can I trace them? There's the rub?" I remembered the Professor telling me he was going to give a series of entertainments in the States. "Of course, he'll begin in New York—everybody does—and is there now."

I put on my hat and hurried down to the reading-room of the hotel to have a look at the *New York Herald*. Yes, there it was at the top of the second column of "Amusements."

NIBLO'S.
EVERY EVENING AT EIGHT O'CLOCK.

PROFESSOR DE VILLE
IN HIS
MARVELLOUS MYSTERIES
AND
MYSTERIOUS MARVELS.

That night I arrived in New York and put up at the Metropolitan Hotel, which I knew joined Niblo's Theatre, and that the Professor was going on, so I went in for a few minutes to make sure it was the same man. It was. How angry I felt. I could have fired fifty thousand blunderbusses loaded with watches, eggs, and ladies' gloves full at him, instead of the one that was exploded in the air by a weak-kneed youth who had gone on the stage to see that all was fair. But I had decided it wouldn't do to show temper. I had no proof whatever that the Professor had anything to do with the theft, no matter what I thought, and the surest way of getting my five-pound note back was to make friends with him.

To have a look at the NEW YORK HERALD.

At last the performance was over. I gave the Professor a quarter of an hour to get to his room, and then sent up my card. I was told to walk up. He received me most kindly, without a shade of the trepidation I had expected him to show when I made my appearance.

"Sit down, my dear sir," he said, shaking my hand warmly, "and join me in a bottle of champagne. It is a real pleasure to meet you again." I thought how we had parted, and wondered if this were not consummate acting on the part of a man whose nerves his business required to be made of adamant. He produced some excellent cigars, and we sat smoking and drinking, and talking of every subject under the sun but the one I most wished to discuss. How to manage it I knew not. The more I put it off the harder it seemed. I hated, too, to spoil the harmony of our most pleasant interview by attempting to introduce the forbidden topic. He had seen much of the world, and warmed by the wine, interesting experiences and amusing anecdotes followed one another from his lips until the clock struck two.

"I had no idea it was so late," I said, rising to go in a

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sort of despair at my lack of moral courage in not yet having spoken of what I had come purposely to speak. "The time has so flown in your most delightful society."

The Professor smiled and bowed.

"You flatter me, sir," he said, and took my proffered hand absently.

"Now or never," thought I, "Pro——" I began, but got no farther. He had begun to speak before me.

"Mr. Robinson, I feel that I owe to you an apology for my rudeness to you at luncheon on board the *Gallia* that last day. I would have written to you, but I knew not your address. Allow me to make my apologies now."

I soon found a chance to tell him the circumstances of the loss of my bank-note as I have told them to you. He listened attentively, and throughout the narration his face exhibited many different and conflicting emotions. He spoke no word until I had finished with: "Do you think you can explain it, Professor, and help me to get back the note?"

"To the first part of your question, I answer—yes, most undoubtedly; to the second—possibly. It is now some fifteen years since I first met Philip Jervise. He was barely eighteen then."

"Fifteen and eighteen are thirty-three. Surely he can't be so old as that?"

"Be good enough not to interrupt me. I think I ought to know. I remember, I thought him too young to be my assistant, for which I had engaged him. But he soon proved himself to be the quickest, sharpest, cleverest assistant I had ever had, and in a few years he had become almost as adroit as myself—pardon the conceit. He went with me everywhere—St. Petersburg, Berlin, Vienna, Madrid, Paris, London—and much of my great success in those cities, which won for me this red ribbon, was owing to the admirable manner in which he aided me without seeming to do so. You have no idea, sir, how much depends on one's assistant. I naturally grew very much attached to him, and hoped in time to see him succeed me when I retired.

"Well, I was offered inducements to come to America. I accepted them. Would that I had never come! I might still have had Philip with me! In December, '79—just one year ago—we took our passage for New York, by another strange coincidence you will think, aboard the *Gallia*. She was the crack boat of the line then, and Commodore Cook commanded her. We had wonderfully fair weather until within two days of Sandy Hook, and then got into a regular twister—a cyclone, which lasted thirty-six hours. Every one was advised to keep below. Some did, others didn't. Among those whom you couldn't keep off the deck was Jervise. He would sneak up after I had gone to bed. On one of these occasions, sir, the ship was struck by a tremendous sea, which swept her decks fore and aft from stem to stern. Jervise was standing just abreast the port side-light tower when the sea struck her—so the second officer, who was on the bridge, told us—but was never seen again."

The Professor covered his face with both hands, and leant forward with his elbows on his knees.

"And—and—do you mean to say," I gasped, "that Jervise was drowned?"

"I do," answered the Professor in a voice much broken by emotion. "The ship was searched from end to end, but no vestige of him was found."

"You astonish me!" I exclaimed; "it seems almost past belief."

"It is quite true," said the Professor, slowly recovering his self-possession. "Excuse this exhibition of

It was my five-pound note!

feeling, pray; I'm all right now. And now, as to the recovery of the note. It must be somewhere, for it is clear he cannot have taken it with him, and——"

"But may he not have burned it by mistake?" I suggested.

The Professor shook his head. "No fear of that, sir. He never made a mistake. But stay; I have a sort of inspiration. You say he drew the note you sent in the letter from the pocket of your waistcoat? Have you that waistcoat now?"

"It is the one I have on now," I said; "I always travel in this suit."

"Well, it's only an idea of mine; but suppose you feel in the pocket now?"

Incredulous, but wishing to please him, I thrust my finger and thumb into the pocket. They touched something; it felt like folded paper, crisp and tough. I drew it out and unfolded it. It was my five-pound note! To assure myself, with heart beating fast against my ribs, I looked in my pocket-book at the number. It was the same—76-1, 28396.

But you may ask: What was to prevent the Professor from getting the note into my pocket by sleight of hand if he was such an adept at it, when he found I might make trouble about it, and from inventing the tale about Jervise being swept overboard and drowned? I'll admit I had those doubts myself. So to satisfy myself, when the *Britannic* landed me in Liverpool, nine days later, I went to the Cunard office, in Water Street, and found—first, that the number of the Professor's *room* was 123; second, that no such person as Jervise had taken passage on the steamer; and third, that the 1879 log of the *Gallia*, deposited in the office, and which they were most polite in overhauling for me, had this entry: *Dec.* 18. *Lat.* 50.32 *N.*; *Lon.* 40.23 *W. Saloon passenger: Philip Jervise, aged* 32; *occupation, Wizard's assistant; lost overboard.*

James Lucellf.

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My only Engagement

BECAUSE I couldn't help it. There! Do you suppose I wanted to be an old maid? Do you suppose I prefer grey cats, green tea, and knitting work to a good-looking husband? I'd like to know what you take me for!

I'm resigned—but I wasn't always so. I was nearly being engaged once, and once I was all but married. I'll tell you about it—in confidence, of course!

He was a fat, jovial, middle-aged widower, with two daughters, and the handsomest whiskers I ever saw, and the delicious, insinuating way he had of bending down his head close to mine, and saying in a half whisper: "How do you do, Miss Hetty?" was beyond all description.

He didn't positively come to see me very often but he was always stopping at our gate (his father's joined ours), and having nice little chats, and strolling home from singing lessons with me.

One evening he dropped in about dusk. I heard him rubbing his boots on the doormat, as I sat at work in the front window.

"Come in, Dutton, and have a pipe," says my father, as hospitable as could be.

"No, thank'ee," says he, "I've called to see Miss Hetty!"

"Oh," says my father, with a little chuckle, "that's it, hey? Well, you'll find her in the drawing-room."

I worked away, making believe not to hear his step until he was close upon me. And then started, and cried: "Dear me!" and dropped my thimble, in the most natural way in the world.

"Don't be frightened, Miss Hetty," says Dutton.

"I'll try not to be, sir," I answered.

"Now what do you suppose I'm going to say to you, my dear?" says he.

"I'm sure I don't know, sir," says I, hanging down my head.

"I've been thinking, this long while, Miss Hetty, that you were fitted to adorn another sphere than that you so admirably occupy here!"

I didn't make any answer, but I eventually resolved that when we were married I'd have a wing added to the south end of the Dutton house—the dining-room always was too small—and I'd have new crimson curtains, instead of the faded old green hangings, and that the old hemlock tree should be cut down as quick as axe could level it.

All these ideas shot through my brain in less than a minute, when I sat and listened with my eyes intently fixed on the hem of my dress.

"Do you suppose," he went on, "you could be induced to leave your home here, and your kind, indulgent father? I know it's asking a great deal of you, Miss Hetty."

"Yes," I faltered, "but ——"

"But the little bird must leave the home-nest some time," he said laughingly, "and if you would accept the offer I have to make you——"

Little as I was experienced in such matters, I felt that the time was come to speak.

"Can you doubt it?" I asked, trying hard to blush, but with a painful consciousness that all my tender emotions were congregating rosily, as usual, in the end of my nose.

"Then it is yes?"

"Of course it is yes," I said archly.

"You are fond of children? My two girls will be among the claimants for your time and affection."

"They shall be daughters to me," I answered with enthusiasm.

"And what time could you——"

"At any time you please to name."

"Ahem—yes—the first week in September would, I suppose, be preferable."

"I will be ready then," I faltered.

"And I will ascertain the particulars, and let you know as early as possible. I told the trustees I thought you could be persuaded to accept the position."

"What trustees?"

"The trustees of the St. Genevian Seminary. The position of which I speak is that of English teacher."

I dropped my work-basket with a crash. Teacher in the St. Genevian Seminary, when I had all the time imagined myself to be sought in marriage. Oh, my countrywomen, what a fall was here! And there sat Dutton, as complacent and smiling as ever. "You see," he pursued the hateful topic. "I have a very special reason for wishing to send my daughters to boarding-school just now; I don't mind telling you, in confidence, my dear Miss Hetty, that I am contemplating a speedy marriage with Lucy Hooper."

Lucy Hooper, indeed! A pink-faced little girl of eighteen who knew no more about housekeeping than I did about verbs. Lucy Hooper!

"And," went on the absurd old widower, smirking like a lover of twenty-one, "I should like to feel that your improving influence was brought to bear upon my dear girls, for Malvina is a little inclined to be sullen, and Sarah Jane——"

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"Yes, I know," I interrupted, with an impatient little toss of my head, "but I don't like teaching!"

"Don't like teaching! Why, I thought——"

"I can't help what you thought!" I interrupted tartly. "I don't choose to accept the place."

Dutton started with eyes like miniature full moons.

"My dear Miss Hetty——"

"I'm not your dear Miss Hetty!" I burst out, ready to cry with rage and indignation, "and I see no use in wasting any further words on the matter. I won't teach in the St. Genevian Seminary! And I dare say Miss Lucy Hooper is wondering why you don't go over there this fine evening."

"Am I to understand——"

"You're to understand exactly what you please!" I exclaimed, beating a retreat with my work-basket. "Good evening, Mr. Dutton."

And that was my first offer—or, at least, the first I was near having.

It was two years after that, when I was living in Madame Rocheparde's fashionable establishment—for I had got tired of the country, and wanted to enjoy a glimpse of fashionable society—that I became acquainted with Gustave Emile Dupin, the dearest, dark-eyed foreigner in the world, with a lisp, and a moustache like black silk.

"I trust that Mademoiselle has not yet her heart surrendered to other aspirants," he said, "for is it that I may hope?"

I didn't know what to say, but Gustave caught my hand in both of his.

"The charming Mademoiselle—why does she hesitate?" he ejaculated; "I am her slave, her faithful dog—the dust beneath her tiniest of tiny feet! Shall my brains explode with the pistol! for life without my Henriette's devotion were but a lengthened misery."

"Gustave, how frightfully you talk," said I, beginning to be quite terrified.

"You will, then, be mine?"

"Yes," I faltered. What else could I say?

I was engaged this time; and how the widows and maidens of Madame Rocheparde's boarding-house did envy me, to be sure. The Countess Dupin—for Gustave had hinted at a title to which he was next heir.

How delightfully it would sound, and how I should enjoy sending my wedding-cards to Lucy Hooper—I mean to Mrs. Dutton.

The wedding was fixed for the next month: it was rather a precipitate arrangement, but Gustave told me, in his pretty chivalric phrase, that he could not exist without me any longer. And I really didn't see the necessity for any more delay; so I got the dress—white silk dress—and began upon the trousseau, with two seamstresses and a machine.

It was the day before the eventful Thursday, and I was busy packing my trunk, when Gustave came in, with dishevelled hair and cravat tied all on one side.

"Dear me, Gustave, what is the matter?"

"It is that your Gustave is wretched, that he seeks but to bid his Henriette adieu ere he himself annihilates. Weep not, my angel! but forget that thy poor Gustave has ever lived."

And then, in answer to my questionings, he confessed that he had endorsed the note of a commercial friend, that the friend had failed to meet his engagements, and that he, consequently, became liable.

"How much is it?" I asked.

"But a paltry hundred pounds, and to-morrow gold will flow in upon me in streams. My arrangements are all made; I shall receive remittances to-morrow. But for to-day—alas, my Henriette! why does not heaven strike me with thunderbolts? Why do I live?"

"I can lend you a hundred pounds, Gustave!"

"My guardian angel! my queen of love! It is but for one lee-tel day, and then your Gustave will heap the treasures of all his ancestors at your feet."

I happened to have just a hundred pounds left, for my outfit had been less expensive than I had expected, and I gave it to him. He bent to kiss my hand—Dutton, in all his common-place courtship, never dreamed of kissing Lucy Hooper's hand! there wasn't the shadow of poetry in his nature.

"To-morrow!" he murmured, "to-morrow! Ah, my Henriette! Until then I count the minutes, I number the seconds."

And he went off buoyant and *débonnaire* as a Chevalier Bayard.

The wedding morning came, but no bridegroom! the mystic hour—but still no Gustave.

I was beginning to grow hysterical, when finally Madame Rocheparde hurried in, with a note bearing my betrothed's delicate caligraphy.

"My poor Mademoiselle, read that!" she cried, throwing it into my lap.

It was a communication from Gustave to Madame Rocheparde, to the effect that he had sailed for France on yesterday's steamer—that he was tired of England and the English, and sought in the more genial sunshine of his native shore a brighter career.

"As to the maid, old and ugly, to whom I am affianced," he wrote, "she has served my turn. I have spent her part of the hundred pounds to buy a passage! Did she for an instant dream that I, Gustave Emile Dupin, should squander myself on her! For her conceit and folly she is but rightly punished. Adieu, my good madame for ever, from your GUSTAVE."

That was the end of my only engagement.

R. H. L.

The Puzzle Picture.

IN last week's *Short Stories* we gave the names of 160 people who had succeeded in correctly putting together the second of the picture puzzles. The only thing to do was to divide the Ten Pound prize amongst them. After the first post and before the competition closed something like nine thousand readers had also sent in correct solutions. It was impossible to divide the sum we had set aside for consolation prizes amongst these, for the simple reason that they would only have obtained a farthing each.

Under the circumstances and in view of the immense interest taken in the picture puzzles we have set a more difficult one this week, which will be found on page 109.

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LEGENDS OF WOLFVILLE.

BY "DAN QUINN."

Wolfville is a Cattleman's Settlement in Arizona, and the Characters in these Legends are Cowboys.

No. 7.—Jaybird's Last Joke on Tenderfoot Smith.

"WHATEVER makes this yere Jaybird Bob believe he's a humourist?" said the old cattle man one afternoon as he slowly returned from a walk.

"Whatever it is misleads him to so deem himself is shorely too many for me. Doc. Peets tells him himse'f one day he's plumb wrong.

"'Your'e nacherally a sombre, morose party,' says Doc. Peets this time, 'an' nothin' jocose or jocund about you. Your disp'sition, Jaybird, don't no more run to jokes than a prairie dog's.'

"'Which I would admire to know why not?' says Jaybird Bob.

"'Well,' goes on Doc. Peets, 'you thinks too slow—too much like a cow in a swamp. Your mind moves sluggish that away, an' sorter sinks to the hocks each step. If you was born to be funny your intellect would be limber an' frivolous.'

"'Bein' all that is personal to me,' says Jaybird Bob, 'I takes leave to regard you as wrong. My jokes is good, high grade jokes, an' when you talks of me bein' morose you're barkin' at a knot.' And so Jaybird goes on a-holdin' of himse'f funny ontil we has him to bury.

"No; Jaybird ain't his sure-enough name; it's just a handle to his 'dentity, so we all picks it up handy an' easy. Jaybird's real name is Graingerford—Poindexter Graingerford. But the same is cumbrous an' unwieldersome. so when he first trails into Woodville we all considers among ourselves an' settles it's quicker to call him jest 'Jaybird Bob' that away. An' we does.

"It's on the spring round-up this Jaybird first develops that he regards himse'f witty. It's in the mornin' jest as we all has saddled up an' lines out to comb the range round about for cattle, there's a tenderfoot along whose name is Smith, an' as he's canterin' off Jaybird comes a curvin' up on his bronco and reaches over an' tails this shorthorn's pony.

"What's tailin' a pony? It's ridin' up from the rear an' takin' a half-hitch on your saddlehorn with the tail of another man's pony and then spurrin' by and swappin' ends with the whole outfit; man, hoss, an' all.

"It's really too toomultuous for a joke, an' mebby breaks the pony's neck; mebby the rider's. But whether he saves his neck or no, the party whose pony is tailed allers emerges tharfrom doshevelled an' wrought up, an' hotter than a wolf. So no one plays this yere joke much; not till he's ready to get shot at, in fact.

"As I says, this Jaybird watches Smith as he rides off. Being new on the range Smith don't ride easy. A cow saddle ain't built like these yere Eastern hulle, nohow. The stirrup is set two inches further back, for one thing, an' it's compiled a heap different other ways. Bein' onused to cow saddles, an' for that matter cow ponies, this Smith lops over for'ard an' beats with his elbows like he's a curlew or some thing flyin', an' I reckons' it's sech proceedin's makes Jaybird allow he's goin' to be funny an' tail Smith's pony.

"As I explains, he capers along after Smith an' reaches over an' gets a handful of the pony's tail; an' then, wroppin' it around his saddlehorn, he goes by on the jump an' spreads Smith an' his bronco promisc'us about the scene. This yere Smith goes along the grass on all-fours, like a jack-rabbit.

"Which Smith, I reckons, is the maddest and hostilest man in Southern Arizona. Before ever he offers to get up, he lugs out his six-shooter an' makes some mighty sincere efforts like, he aims to shoot up Jaybird. But he's slow with his weapon, bein' spraddled out on the grass that away, an' it gives Dave Tutt an' Enright an' some more of us a chance to jump in between an' stop the deal.

"We all picks Smith up an' rounds up his pony—which scrambles to his feet after bein' tailed an' is now cavortin' about likes its mind is overturned—an' explains to him this yere is a joke. But he is moody an' relentless about it; an' it don't take no hawk to see he don't like it nor forgive Jaybird Bob a little bit.

"'Tailin' a gent's pony,' says this Smith, 'is no doubt thrillin' amusement for folks lookin' on, but thar's nothin' of a redeemin' nature from the standpoint of the party whose pony's upheaved that away. Not to be misunderstood at this p'int,' goes on this Smith, 'I want to announce that from now for'ard life will have but one purpose with me, which'll be to down the next gent who ever tails a pony of mine. The present incident goes as a jest, but you can gamble the next won't be so regarded.'

"That sorter ends the talk, an' all of us but the cook an' the horse-hustlers bein' in the saddle by now, we disperse ourselves through the country to work in the cattle, an' proceed with the round-up we're on. We can see, though, that tailin' Smith's pony is not to be attempted again with safety.

"It's when we all rides away that Doc. Peets—who's out with the round-up, though he ain't got no cattle to brand himse'f—tells Jaybird he's not a humourist, like I already repeats.

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"But, as I suggests, this Jaybird Bob can't believe it none. He's mighty sure his jokes is excellent good jokes, an' while it's plain Smith ain't got no confidence in him, an' distrusts him complete since he tips over his bronco that mornin', it looks like Jaybird can't let him alone. An' these misdeeds of Jaybird's keeps goin' on ontil by the nearest mistake—for it's sure an accident if ever one happens in the cow country—this yere tenderfoot shoots Jaybird an' kill's him for good.

"It looks afterward to us like it's a speshul providence to warn folks not to go projectin' about engaged in what you might call physical jokes. Still, this yere removal of Jaybird didn't take place till mighty near the close of the round up; an' intervenin' he's goin' round stockin' the cards an' settin' up hands on the pore shorthorn continuous.

"One of Jaybird's jokes, 'one of his best,' Jaybird calls it, results in stampedin' the herd of cattle we was bringin' along at the time—bein' all cows an' their calves—to a brandin' pen. Which thar's 2,000, big an' little, in the bunch; an' Jaybird's humour puts 'em to flight like so many snowbirds, an' it takes two days hard ridin' for the whole outfit to bring 'em together agin'.

"Among other weaknesses this Smith imports from the States is, he's afraid of snakes. Rattlesnakes is his abhorrence; an' if each is a disembodied spirit he couldn't want 'em further off. He's allers alarmed that mebby, somehow a rattlesnake will come pokin' in under his blankets nights; an' camp with him while he's asleep. An' this yere wretched Jaybird fosters these delusions.

"'About them serpents,' I overhears Jaybird say to him one evenin' while we're settin' round, all but Moore an' Tut who's riding herd, ''bout them serpents; a gent can't be too particular. It look like they has but one hope, which is to crawl into a gent's blankets an' sleep with him. An' if he moves or turns over, they simply gives a buzz an' grabs him. I knows of forty folks who's bit that away by snakes, an' nary a one lives to explain the game.'

"'Be rattlesnakes thick in Arizona?' I hears Smith say to this Jaybird.

"'Be they thick?' answers Jaybird, 'Well, I shore wishes I had whiskey for all the rattlesnakes thar is yereabouts. I don't want to go overstatin' the census to a gent who is out playin' for information, an' who's learnin' fast, but I s'pose now thar ain't none less than a billion snakes in Southern Arizona alone. If I could saw off the little passel of cattle I has on this range, you can gamble I'd pull my freight to-morry. It's all right for such old Cimmarons as Enright an' sech parties as that sawbones Peets to go bluffin' about their bein' no rattlesnakes to speak of; an' that they couldn't p'ison you to death nowhow; but you bet I ain't seen forty of my nearest friends die of snake bites an' not learn nothin'. An' almost every time it's a rattlesnake as comes slidin' into bed with 'em while they're locked in dreams, an' who gets hot an' goes to chewin' of 'em, jest because they want to turn out before the snake does. Rattlesnakes that away wants to sleep till it's fourth drink time an' the sun's 'way up yonder. An' when a man goes to rollin' out of his blankets say at sun-up, it makes 'em monstrous angry to be disturbed; an' the first he knows of where they be an' how they looks on early risin', their teeth's in him up to the guard, an' before night there's one man the less to cook for, an' an extra saddle rides along in the grub waggon with the blankets when they moves camp.'

"Of course, all this is a heap of impressive to this Smith; an' while Enright an' Peets both tells him this Jaybird's havin' fun with him, you can see he's mortal afraid every night when he spreads his blankets, an' he makes a circle about where he sleeps with a horsehair lariat he's got from a Mexican; an' who tells him it will tickle the snakes' necks when they goes to crawl across it, an' makes 'em keep away.

"The way this Jaybird manages to stampede that time is this away; Jaybird comes ridin' in from the cattle about three hours before sun-up to turn out Tutt, who is due to take his place on herd. Jaybird's got a rawhide rope he's been draggin' about in the grass which makes it damp an' cold. As Jaybird rides up to camp he sees this Smith rolled up in his blankets snorin' to beat the band.

"Of course Jaybird's out to be joyous in a second. He rides up close to this helpless shorthorn as he lays asleep, an' throws a coil of his wet rawhide lariat across his countenance where it's turned up in the moonlight. Jest as it settles down cold an' startlin' on Smith's skin, Jaybird yells:

"'Snakes, Smith! Thar's a rattlesnake on you bigger'n a dog.'

"Jaybird says afterwards as how this Smith behaves tremendous. He boils up into the atmosphere with a yell like a wolf; an' grabbin' a blanket in each of his hands he starts out over the plains in a state of frenzy. Which the worst is he goes headlong towards the herd; an' what with them shrieks he volunteers, an' the blankets flappin' an' wavin' thar ain't a cow in the bunch who stays in her right mind a moment, but springs to her feet an' takin' her offspring along, goes surging off towards the hills for good. You couldn't turn or stop 'em then. It's the completest case of stampede I ever turns out to behold.

"No; this Smith never learns the rights of the epeesode. He's that peevish an' violent by nature no one tells him it's Jaybird, Enright stands in to cap the game himse'f; an' puts it up in confab with this Smith the next day as how he sees the rattlesnake, an' that it's mighty near the size of a roll of blankets.

"'It was shore,' says Enright when he an' Smith is conversin' thereon, 'the most giant serpent I ever sees without the aid of liquor. An' when he goes streakin' off into the gloom, bein' amazed an' rattled by your cries, he leaves so far as I am concerned a trail of relief behind. You can gamble, I wasn't interruptin' of no sech snake; nor makin' of no pretext for his detention.'

"'What for was his rattles like?' says Smith; an' he gets pale at the mere sound of Enright's talk.

"'As to his rattle,' says Enright, like he's thoughtfully tryin' to recall 'em to his mind, ''as far this reptile's rattles; it was that dark that while I sees 'em I couldn't but jest say. So far as I notes anything they looks like a belt full of cartridges; sorter corrugated an' numerous.'

"Now this yere which I relates, while no doubt burnin' experiences to Smith, is after all harmless enough. An' to people not careful about the basis of their glee it might do some to laugh at. But it all closes upon a play, with nothin' gay nor merry in it; leastwise, not for Jaybird Bob.

"This yere finish joke of Jaybird's transpires one evenin' just as the cook's startin' in to rustle us some chuck. The grub waggon's been stopped in the mouth of what's called Peeled Pine cañon. Every man's in the camp but this yere tenderfoot Smith. Enright, who's actin' as round-up boss for the outfit—for everybody's cattle bein' worked in younison, that away, like we allers does—has sent Smith peerin' round for cattle, way off up the long deep valley into which the Peeled Pine cañon

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opens. This shorthorn's due to be back any time now. 'cause it's only a question of how far up the valley does he go. He don't run no show to be lost, for nothin' less aerial than a goat could climb out of the cañon he's in, an' tharfore he's bound to find our camp.

"Of course, knowin' every man's station in the day's ridin', we're plenty aware that this tenderfoot Smith is some'ers above us in the valley. None of the rest of us is turnin' our minds to him probably, except Jaybird Bob. All of a bump like a buckin' pony it strikes Jaybird that he's missin' a onusual chance to be buoyant.

"'What for a play would it be,' says Jaybird, rousin' up from where he lay watchin' of the cook slice salt hoss for fryin'. 'What for a game would it be,' says he, 'for a passel of us to lay up the draw, an' bushwhack this ontaught person Smith as he comes ridin' down to camp? We all could hop out at him, a-whoopin' an' shootin' an' bein' all of us wropped up in blankets, he'll allow it's shore Injuns an' go plumb locoed.'

"'You'll kep harrowin' away at this yere Smith party, Jaybird,' says Enright, 'ontil you arises from the game loser. Now I don't reckon none I'd play Apaché, if I was you. Thar's too much effort in bein' an Apaché, that way. I'd lay yere an' think up some joke which don't demand so much industry, an' ain't calc'lated to scare an innocent chap to death.'

"But Jaybird won't listen. He falls into admiration of his scheme, and at last Tutt an' Jack Moore allows they'll go along an' play there aborigines with Jaybird an' note how the tenderfoot stands the racket.

"'As long as this Jaybird's bound to make the play,' says Jack Moore to Enright, talkin' to one side, 'it's a heap better to have the conservative element represented in the deal. So I puts it up, it's a good sage move for me an' Tutt to stand in. We all will come handy to pull Jaybird an' this Shorthorn apart if they get their horns locked in the cause of these witticisms.'

"Enright takes the same view; so Jaybird an' Moore. an' Tutt goes off up the cañon a mile, an' lays in wait surreptitious to head off Smith. Moore tells me the story when he an' Tutt comes ridin' back with the corpse.

"'This is how we does,' says Moore. 'Me an' Tutt, an' deceased—which last is Jaybird all right enough—is ensconced in a bunch of oak bushes, an' behind a p'int of rocks. Jaybird's got his blanket 'round him so he looks like an Injun. It ain't long when we hears the tenderfoot comin' down the cañon: it's likely he's half a mile away.

"'He's runnin' in on to us at a road gait, an' when he's about two hundred yards off, Jaybird turns out a yell to make you shiver; shakes a load or two outen his gun; goes surgin' out from around the p'int of rocks, an' charges straight at this unthinkin' tenderfoot. It is due to trooth to say me an' Tutt follows this Jaybird's suit; only not so violent as to whoops.

"'Does it scare this tenderfoot? Well, it shorely alarms him some. He takes Jaybird for a savage an' makes no question; which the same is no wise strange; I'd took him for a savage myse'f, only bein' in at the deal that away I know it's Jaybird. So as I remarks it horrified the tenderfoot no end, an' at the first sight of Jaybird he whirls his pony an' goes back up that valley like an antelope.

"'Nacherally we all follows; Jaybird leadin' a whoopin' an' a shootin' an' throwin' no end of sperit into it. It is a success, this piece of wit is up to this p'int, an' Jaybird puts a heap of zest into it.

"'The weak spot in this piece of humour is because of the ideas this tenderfoot's been gainin' an' the improvements he's been makin' while straggling about in our company. I onhesitatingly states that if this yere joke had been pulled off by Jaybird when this gent Smith first enters our midst it would have been the victory of his life, an' somethin' to be proud of. But Jaybird defers it too long. This tenderfoot has acquired a few Western ways, jest enough to sp'le the fun, an' send poor Jaybird a-curvin' to his home on 'igh.

"'This is what the shorthorn does which teaches me he's learnin'. While he's humpin' off up the cañon fit to distance a storm-wind; an' me an' Jaybird an' Tutt is stampedin' along in pursoot, the fugitive onlimbers his six-shooter an' without even turnin' his head, or lookin' back at us, he onhooks the entire bundle of lead our way.

"'Which the worst feature of it is, this backhanded blind shottin' is a success. The very first shot gets Jaybird plumb the head, an' he goes off his pony without mentionin' a thing about it to either Tutt or me.

"'That's all thar is to report. Dave an' me pull up our broncos, abandons the joke at this crisis, lay Jaybird across his saddle like a sack of corn, an' returns to state the case.'

"'Whatever did you all do with the frightened stranger?' asks Enright.

"'Which we never does nothin',' says Moore. 'The last I sees of him, he's flying up the valley, hittin' nothin' but the high places. An' assoomin' his project's to get away he's succeedin' admirable. As he vanishes I should jedge from his motions he's reloadin' his gun; an' from the luck he has with Jaybird, Tutt an' me is led to believe that's no real object in followin' him further. I don't press my society on nobody; shorely not on some locoed tenderfoot who's pulled his gun, an' is blazin' away erratic, without purpose of aim.'

"'Don't you an' Tutt know where he is at all?' demands Enright.

"'Which we shorely don't,' says Moore. 'If his horse holds out an' he don't swerve none he's p'intin' out in when he fades from view, he's goin' to be over in the San Simon country by to-morry mornin' when we eats our grub; an' that's half-way to the Borax desert. If you wants my impressions,' conclooded Moore, 'drawn from a-seein' his depart, I'm free to say I don't reckon you're goin' to see this tenderfoot soon.'

"An' that's about the size of it, Moore jest about calls the turn. Jaybird's last joke scares this tenderfoot Smith plumb out of Arizona; an' that ain't one of us ever sees hair, hide, horn nor hoof-mark of him no more. An' he takes with him, this Smith does, the best pony in our bunch."

ON OPPOSITE PAGE is shown on a reduced scale the beautiful design for the cover of the New Musical Magazine. The first number will be issued on February 29th for March 1st. "MELODY" will consist of 48 pages of vocal and instrumental music by the best and most popular composers, and will be printed on stout paper, music size. Price Sixpence nett. It will appear monthly. Please ask your newsagent to order a copy for you.

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The Story of a Shameful Crime.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Something Tangible!

Forgery—flight!

Those two words were the theme, the burden, the essence of all Richard Sheldon's thoughts, as, one week after the discovery of the White God as an empty god, he sat at his desk in the library and bent his head on his hands, hollow-eyed, pale-faced, haunted with dread, rage and disappointment.

They had been tricked, cheated, baulked! Once the crushing, appalling dismay of their discovery had passed, and they found only the impress of stored treasure inside the idol—not a particle of the treasure itself—they examined it more closely. The cutaway section in the back showed that recently—within months, perhaps weeks—some intelligent hand had opened it, rifled it. Whose? Was this the vaunted vengeance of the Aztec high priest, Medeiras?

It mattered not. The treasure had eluded their grasp; it was lost to them for ever more; they had been cheated of their prey, and, as the first shock of the bitter disappointment passed away, like two birds of evil omen, they looked over the field for new victims.

The White God had been presented to the Exhibition—already it was being prepared for a place in the Mexican exhibit at the famous World's Fair. The donation had been made in a depressed, half-hearted way, but the publicity given to Sheldon through the gift helped his credit, augmented his schemes; and credit and schemes were all the capital he now possessed to bank upon.

He was in a tight fix—a bad predicament, a close corner. If Golcondas went up, he was all right; but Golcondas had persisted in a contrary course. It had gone waywardly down, down, until no one would even take the stock as a present, fearing it might drag them down with it.

"It's ruin—sheer, blank ruin!" he had told Colonel Lytle desperately. "Five years of luxury and then a famine! I can't, I won't endure it! I can't go back to the crusts and the old starving life!"

"Then better it!" had sprung to Lytle's ready lips.

"How?"

"Your credit is good."

"Yes."

"Borrow all you can—use your friends to the last available limit of cash accommodation. Bulk all your operations for a near future date and then——"

"Bolt?"

"Exactly. I fancy you and I could enjoy a hundred thousand at Paris, or Baden-Baden, or in sunny Italy. Come! is it a bargain?"

"Yes."

"And I'll help you. There's nothing but beggary promised here—the Ringold fortune is lost to us. Be speedy, politic, cautious. With your eminent qualifications as a financier and your superb credit as a successful business man, even a quarter of a million wouldn't be an impossibility, and"—with a sinister smile—"when legitimate endorsements are exhausted, you are an apt penman, Sheldon!"

Forgery! Flight! That was how Richard Sheldon arrived at this conclusion—a conclusion that had serious obstacles in its way, he decided, as he sat moping at his desk that afternoon.

He looked up eagerly and relievedly as a visitor was announced—Colonel Lytle—and he greeted him gladly.

Colonel Lytle was natty, agile, neat as ever. The gleaming straw-coloured sun-stone still blazed in his snowy shirt front, but his manner was a trifle more nervous than usual; the crow's feet had deepened about his eyes, and he had the restless glance of a man easily frightened at shadows.

"Well, Dick," he spoke familiarly, and with a cheery assumption as he lit a cigar and faced his associate, "how goes it?"

"The money?"

"Yes."

"All right. In one week I shall bulk a clear hundred thousand down on the bank, discount, deposit; cheque out to you, and—"

"Slope!"

"That's it," assented Sheldon; and then mechanically he relapsed into his previous engrossed silence.

"See here, Dick!" began Lytle, after watching his companion studiously and curiously from the corner of his eyes for some time, "what's the matter with you lately?"

"Eh! me?" repeated Sheldon, with an embarrassed start.

"Yes. You are concealing some secret from me—some serious trouble."

"Well, you are right," admitted Sheldon. "Lytle, I'm frightened! Shall I tell you why? That detective we lured—"

"Dean?"

"Exactly."

"What of him?"

"He's shadowing me."

"Nonsense!"

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"No, it is no nonsense. It is the actual fact. He's been watching me for over a week past. I've caught constant sight of his figure lurking about the house here, at the office, in the street. What does it mean?"

"A new and larger bribe, to be sure!" jeered Lytle reassuringly. "He's repented his repentance. Now, don't you get flustered. Hurry up your arrangements, and let us get away before he approaches you again. He can prove nothing, only he might stumble over our new plot."

"I wish I knew the true motive of his actions," murmured Sheldon, half persuaded. "I say, Lytle, will you do me a favour?"

"Certainly."

"Get some one to watch him in turn, and keep him from getting too closely on our track."

"I will, but I think it vain trouble."

"And try and find out something tangible, Lytle!"

"Something tangible? Very good," assented Lytle graciously.

The two men parted—the merchant to decide on hastening his preparations for flight, the other to deepen the traces of care on his hard, cynical face by reflecting deeply, as he left Sheldon's house.

They were at odds, these two men; one was deceiving the other, though neither suspected it.

Richard Sheldon had other fears than fears of Detective Dean alone.

The previous night, closing the inside blinds of the library, a man skulking under the windows had glared in at him, and abruptly disappeared.

It gave him a dreadful shock, the more so as, in that momentary flash of the lurker's eyes, he seemed to go back five years, and recall the awful look of accusation and reproach dead Adrian Burgoyne had bestowed upon him as he was marched from the prisoner's dock to serve an unjust sentence at penal servitude.

How those eyes haunted him!—how they revived the past! how he seemed to discern the hand of the dead in the abstraction of the dead man's treasure! This it was that made Richard Sheldon moody and unsocial and abstracted; and he was ashamed to confess his "vagaries" even to his accomplice.

Colonel Lytle was a little better actor, but he had far more reason to dread than his ally; he had more to conceal, too.

A week previous he had made a very startling discovery. The girl, Patrice Ringold, had escaped from the charge of the woman who had been her gaoler during his sojourn in Mexico. She had, the woman said, made close inquiries about his (Lytle's) present movements and place of residence, and the woman had unsuspectingly given her the desired information. That same evening Patrice disappeared. The ensuing day a veiled female had called at his apartments, had insisted on awaiting his return, had sat in his little parlour for an hour or more, had grown weary of waiting, had departed, and the next discovery the dismayed Lytle made was that a certain valuable packet of documents concerning his dealings with Richard Sheldon was missing from a cabinet.

Could his visitor have been Patrice? Could she have been the thief? Scarcely. Once free, she would hardly venture once more within the reach of the tiger's claws. As to the papers—they might have been destroyed accidentally. All the same, he worried over all this, but he deemed it unwise to reveal the truth to his accomplice. It would distress the merchant, and Sheldon needed all his nerve for his bold financial exploits just now.

Another source of concern for Lytle was the fact that he was being "shadowed," as well as Sheldon. Twice he had caught sight of a sinister form near his home. Were the detectives on his track? For what? He laughed at the presumption. He was too clever to leave any incriminating traces of crime down the sinuous path he had trodden so triumphantly.

He went to the theatre after leaving Sheldon. He tried to forget his hopes and fears alike by mixing with the gay crowds and watching the actors, but it was a failure.

"Sheldon must hurry up his plans," he murmured as he stepped into a cab wearily, and hurried for home later that same evening. "I don't feel right. There's danger in the air. I have a presentiment of disaster. Ah! who was that?"

Who? indeed! The same lurking form that he had seen near his home two nights previous. The mysterious stranger glided past the cab, directed one glance in at the window full at Lytle's startled face, and then vanished.

But such a look! The fierce, glittering eyes seemed to reflect the basilisk glow of the yellow sun-stone; they seemed to mock, menace, devour, all at once.

"Fancy!" grated out Lytle irritably, as the cab drove on. "To imagine those eyes resembled those of the fanatic priest, Medeiras! Sheldon must get the money together, and leave here. I'm getting nervous. One good thing, I put a private inquiry agent on the trail of our trailers this afternoon. He'll report something tangible by to-morrow."

"Something tangible?" Those were Sheldon's anxious words. For "that something tangible" to allay his disordered fears the merchant sat waiting the following afternoon.

"Lytle will soon be here," he murmured; "our plans are nearly ripe; the hundred thousand will soon shape themselves."

He waited one hour, impatiently; two, in a fever of suspence; three, in an unreasoning, fault-finding rage. He might have waited till doomsday for that "something tangible" for all Colonel Lytle would ever again bring him the information he so craved!

For at No. 8, Roosevelt Mansions, Colonel Lytle's handsome bachelor apartments, the shades had not been raised, although it was afternoon, and the handsome ormulu lamp burnt brightly, although the sun blazed fiercely without.

The long shadows began to fall, they groped over the blank wall below the closed windows; they tried to creep through the blinds, tightly shut.

Baffled, they sank lower to the court below, giving up a task that needed the aid of light, not of darkness.

For, lying across the costly Wilton carpet, his blank face reflecting the delicate hues of the luxurious draperies, his eyes staring fixedly at the gold-fretted ceiling, was stretched the owner of all this magnificence.

The eye of straw flame that blazed in his immaculate shirt-front the evening previous, so like the eye of the lurker who had haunted his footsteps near the theatre, was no longer in place. Instead, an ugly rent showed, as if the sun-stone jewel of the White God had been forcibly wrenched from its sacrilegious possessor.

That white shirt-front bore a new object of contrast now—a red-dabbled blur, and above it was a curiously-carved knife-handle, bearing the Aztec word—"Medeiras!"

And there he lay at rest!—at rest so perfect for lip and brow, that only the judgment trump would ever awaken him—Colonel Lytle, aged forty-seven, stabbed to the heart by an unknown assassin—*or avenger!*

And by his side, tracing weird outlines on the costly carpet, dabbling the fluffy rugs, dashing the marble-tiled fireplace with fantastic splatters, was——

"Something tangible!"—*blood!*

CHAPTER XXIX.

Resurgam!

The Sunday succeeding the return of the £2,000 to Richard Sheldon, Mr. Detective Dean went to church—the first time in ten years. Thereafter he began to read his Bible morning and night.

He was a changed man. What he had undertaken,

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through the promptings of remorse, as a penance, now became a sacred duty—a calm, satisfying obligation. He began to feel more manly and energetic. He had done a great wrong; he intended to right it, so far as lay within his power.

Dean had a basis to proceed on. From the overheard conversation between the two plotters in the library of Sheldon's house, he realised that they had undertaken some great theft, and had been baffled in their efforts. Furthermore, he knew that they were plotters, in possession of property wrongfully wrested from others. But how to prove that? All this would come out later. He was more anxious to prove the innocence of Convict 407 than settle the question of the guilt of Richard Sheldon and his confederate, Colonel Lytle. The one would hinge on the other.

Convict 407, Adrian Burgoyne, was alive. Not for a moment did he doubt that fact. The tablet bearing those soul-harrowing words, "Murdered by the law," had been written by Adrian Burgoyne. He knew the handwriting perfectly. The mock tombstone had received its startling epitaph nearly a week after his supposed death.

Where, then, was the man he sought?

Not a clue, not a trace, could be gleaned from the most persistent investigation and search, and, for want of some progress more satisfactory, Dean set himself to watching Richard Sheldon.

Upon the evening of the day that witnessed the last interview between Colonel Lytle and Sheldon, the detective was shadowing the merchant's house. He saw Lytle come out and go down the street. Sheltered by a tree, he saw, too, the anxious Sheldon seated, writing, in the library. And then, of a sudden, every professional instinct of caution and shrewdness was aroused to the keenest exercise, as he saw a form cross the little garden plot of the house, linger in the shadow of a bush, survey the merchant critically, and glide furtively to the street.

"Someone else on the trail!" ejaculated Dean, startled. "It's no department man. I never saw that face before, but —oh! impossible! impossible! and yet——"

What was it in the straight, athletic form, in the graceful, steady poise of the man who had just left the precincts of Richard Sheldon's home, that carried Berwyn Dean's mind back to the scene at the Exhibition grounds, to Dormitory D, to the mad dash for liberty, to the personality that had filled his thoughts, to the exclusion of all other themes, for a week past?

There was a motive for Adrian Burgoyne's shadowing of Richard Sheldon. They were enemies. The one was the victim of the other. It was an erratic venture to deem the prowler the escaped convict, but that idea took entire and forcible possession of the mind of the officer, and, as the lurker started down the street, he started after him.

The object of his attention led him quite a long and a brisk chase. When he halted, finally, it was at a second-rate hotel in a retired street. This the man entered, secured a key at the clerk's desk, and ascended the stairs to his room.

Two trifling occurences had intensified Dean's eagerness, as he followed the lurker. He noticed a barely observable halt in one foot—a last, lingering memento of the penitentiary lock-step, which hangs to a convict for years after his release. The man he had pursued had certainly, at some time or other in his life, "done time" in a prison.

Again, as the latter opened the door of the hotel he had held it to allow a man to pass, and he held it just in the manner a convict would in the prison, when according to custom, he stood ready to be locked into his cell.

Dean had also entered the lobby of the hotel, and safe among the idlers there, eagerly watched every movement of the man he was shadowing. He kept his eye on the black figure-checks which sprang up into place as the key was removed, and, approaching the desk as the other disappeared, he observed that it was "47"—corresponding to the room occupied by the possessor of the key.

"The gentleman in number forty-seven?" he spoke carelessly, to the clerk.

"Yes."

"Is not his name Brown?"

"No, Warren. Let me see—E. G. Warren; no, here it is —R. E. Warren. Know him?"

"Fancy I do," returned Dean, and then, with wild eagerness he inspected the name which the clerk had indicated on the hotel visitors' book.

"*It's him!*" fairly panted the excited Dean.

Yes; no need to guess, or theorise, or investigate further. The man he had followed from Richard Sheldon's home was no other, could be no other, than Convict 407, Adrian Burgoyne!

For, R. E. Warren or any other fictitious name, the handwriting was unmistakably that of Adrian Burgoyne—unmistakably, too, the same as that contained upon the pencilled mock tombstone now reposing in the officer's inner pocket.

Detective Dean had found his man. It augured well as a recompense for his honest endeavour. His heart warmed to genuine joy. He was up the stairs in a twinkling, and at the door of room 47.

Tap—tap—tap!

"Come in!"

The detective turned the knob. He crossed the threshold, pushed the door shut again, and, leaning against it, looked fixedly at the single occupant of the apartment.

A barely perceptible quiver crossed the form of the other. Then, rigid as marble, posed to studied dignity and steadiness, he said coldly:

"What do you want?"

"*You!*"

The detective stretched forth a hand impressively.

"You, Adrian Burgoyne, Convict 407," he said rapidly. "You know me—Detective Dean? But not as a prisoner, a fugitive from justice—but I want you, Adrian Burgoyne!"

The other came straight up to him. Straight into the detective's eyes he looked, never quailing, never moving a muscle of his face.

"Mr. Detective Dean," he said calmly, "you call me Adrian Burgoyne. You call me Convict 407. Prove it!"

Almost in vindictive triumph, he stood there to afford the other a full view of his face. Prove it, indeed! The detective realised the extraordinary change in this man's personnel since last he had seen him, and comprehended the full integrity of that bold challenge.

"I do not wish to prove it," he announced simply. "On the contrary, I wish to aid you in hiding, in keeping your new identity a secret, because——"

He paused. The other had regarded his utterances with amazement.

"If I wished to prove it to my own satisfaction, however," continued the officer, on a new line of thought, "I would simply consult *this!*" Dean, as he spoke, drew forth the mock wooden tombstone.

Overwhelmed, the other fell back. From the very grave the dead past had arisen to confront him.

CHAPTER XXX.

ON THE TRAIL.

"MURDERED!"

A cold horror seized the heart of Richard Sheldon, and its icy fingers seemed searching for his own vitals, as he learnt, for the first time, the reason why Colonel Lytle had not brought him that tangible information he had desired.

The intelligence was awarded him by a low-browed man of shabby garb and shifting eyes, who answered to the name of Davenant, and who appeared at the home of the merchant at dusk, the day after the tragedy.

"I was employed by Colonel Lytle to do some secret inquiry work," he vouchsafed to Sheldon. "He told me to

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report to you, or to himself, as was most convenient under the circumstances."

"I understand," murmured Sheldon, little dreaming what was coming.

"I went to his house this afternoon——"

"And he not being at home?" interpolated Sheldon suggestively.

"But he was!"

"Ah! and sent you here?"

"No, he will never direct me again, and that's why I hurried to you, fearing some complication. His landlady had not seen him leave his room since morning, so we peered in. The lamp was burning, although it was broad daylight. We broke in the door. He lay where he had lain since yesterday—across the carpet—dead!"

"Murdered!" gasped Sheldon, white, and sick at heart. "You don't mean to tell me that——"

"Yes, sir. In his heart a dagger—Mexican make. From his window dangled a horse-hair rope—that's how the assassin got in—Mexican make, too."

"Anything missing? — his valuables? — the motive robbery?" chattered the horrified Sheldon.

"No; the motive is hard to guess. The only thing missing, we could notice, was a certain great straw-coloured diamond he wore in his bosom. That had been wrenched violently from its place."

"Don't speak to me! I am sick at heart, shocked, overcome!"

Richard Sheldon waved the man to silence, and bent his ashen face in his trembling hands.

Mexican rope and dagger—the motive—unknown—the yellow diamond missing!

Ah! *he* knew the motive—personal revenge! In a flash, he recalled the story told to him, jarringly, jeeringly, by the bravado-inspired Lytle of the theft of the White God of the fierce, fateful threat of Medeiras.

The vengeance of the Aztec high priest had been swift! He was no idle boaster. The man who had so ruthlessly invaded the sanctuary of his deities, had rifled the blue marble pedestal of the famous idol, and had left a trail of blood along his heedless, reckless course, had paid the penalty of his temerity!

Medeiras had struck the blow—had avenged his insulted deity, had secured the eye of yellow flame, the sun-stone jewel, to blazon anew in the cave of Bureldo.

Was that all? With an uneasy shudder, Richard Sheldon realised that the fanatic would never rest until he had secured the White God as well. Would he trace it to him, and hold him responsible? He dared not put the police on the trail of the assassin. That would bring out all his own infamy in the conniving at a wicked theft; would raise up a scandal that would deter the execution of his plans. No, if Medeiras passed him by scathless, he would not assail Medeiras. He had lost an ally; one by one, his mainstays of security were leaving him. Well, the end was near! A week, at the farthest, and he would fly the country, and all this peril, uncertainty and terror.

He summoned up courage at last to accompany Davenant to Lytle's apartments. As the best friend of the murdered man, he provided for his burial, took charge of his papers, blindfolded the police, while feigning the utmost anxiety to apprehend the murderer, and tried to hurry the tragic episode into obscurity. He knew that the researches of the detective would end in darkness, would terminate in failure complete at the blank wall of "No clue!"

He hastened his plans all he dared. It was now Wednesday. On the Monday following, if nothing happened to defeat his designs, he would leave the country.

Three occurrences changed his plans, however. They came so disastrously, so unexpectedly sudden, that he could barely analyse one event ere another trod closely upon its heels.

On Friday evening he received a letter from his banker. It announced, formally, that the bank refused to make the loan he required. Funds were short, the money market was tight. He must look elsewhere.

The letter turned Richard Sheldon's face white to the lips. It *scared* him. What did it mean? What could it mean, except that some enemy had given the bank a hint of his insolvency? Ah! "That accursed detective, Dean!" This was his work. Was a net forming to ensnare him? He fluttered like a caged bird already. The uncertain, the vague, the unknown, terrified, enthralled him.

Bah! he would not give up the fight. His handbag packed, the £2,000 returned by Dean safe in his pocket, the schemer was ready to fly. Half a loaf was better than none. As he realised, however, that phantoms conjured by his own guilty conscience were alarming him, that the law had no tangible hold upon him, he resolved to wait a day or two longer, at least. Golcondas looked more promising. They might go up a few points. He could borrow a few thousands of friends. He would sell off some of the costly plate and pictures of his house for ready cash. He decided to wait a few days. He timed his flight to catch an Antwerp steamer on Tuesday evening. That was six days ahead. Four forged notes came due then. Yes, he was safe until Tuesday noon.

The second discovery was a report from the special agent, Davenant. He had accidentally found the missing Patrice Ringold.

Next, he had shrewdly, unsuspectedly, shadowed Mr. Detective Dean. He told in detail of the movements of the man-hunter, and, putting this visit of Dean to the bank with that call upon a broker, the merchant gnashed his teeth, as he realised that his former employé was now fighting against his interests.

He pricked up his ears, his lips began to quiver, a "nasty" look came into his wicked eyes as the agent proceeded to state that Dean was given to frequent visits to a man at a retired hotel—to frequent consultations, as well.

"He's a young man, but an odd-looking fellow," explained Davenant. "I think his Malay-like complexion and lashless eyelids and strange appearance are part of a disguise."

"What is his name?" asked Sheldon curiously.

"Warren, on the hotel books. Last night, however, I got into the corridor where his room is. I tilted a transom in an adjoining apartment. I heard them talking. I heard, too, the detective call him by what I suppose is his right name—a slip of the tongue quickly checked, but twice unconsciously repeated."

"And what was the name?" queried Sheldon, little dreaming of the powder-mine his curiosity was to set aflame.

"Burgoyne," came the prompt reply.

Richard Sheldon had been watching the man and listening to his report with his arm leaning on the desk before him, his hand shading his eyes.

At the mention of that name—a name potent to unlock the door of a grave, and set loose a thousand hideous emissaries of augury, doubt and dread—the merchant started so violently that his twitching elbow sent a cut-glass inkstand crashing to the carpet.

He heeded not that the gruesome liquid formed a marring, uncouth rivulet. His eyes staring, he gasped out, hoarsely:

"Say that again!"

"Burgoyne."

"You are sure of this?" came in a swift, tumultuous breath from the plotter's lips.

"Yes, I couldn't mistake it. They talked. I only heard a word here and there, but the Burgoyne fellow is a convict, and——"

"I wish to see that man!"

"Eh!—the detective?" queried the other, in some surprise.

"No—Burgoyne; the man calling himself Burgoyne. Oh,

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impossible!" muttered Richard Sheldon to himself. "It cannot be the same—the convict! *He* is dead—drowned, in his grave these months ago!"

"I can arrange it," announced Davenant.

"Very good."

"So you can not only see him, but watch him, for an hour, a day—all the time, if you like."

"Excellent! It may mean double pay for you if you can."

"You see," continued Davenant, "Dean is like an eel, slippery, active; flitting here and there, all the time. At the hotel where his friend is stopping, however, he is stationary for an hour or two every evening; so I concluded to camp next to them. I engaged room 48. Burgoyne has number 47, next door. Through the transom you can look and listen."

"I understand," interrupted Sheldon peevishly.

"There's the key."

"Thanks. I shall not forget your shrewdness and fidelity. You can find out more about the whereabouts of the girl, Patrice, and report to me to-morrow. I will undertake to watch the Dean end of the case for a day or two."

Two hours later, well muffled up, and wearing a false beard, that very fairly concealed his identity, Richard Sheldon repaired to the hotel where Adrian Burgoyne was staying.

He reached room 48, and let himself in. It was dark and chill, but he moved about with caution, for, through the clouded glass of a transom in a connecting door, he could make out a light in the next apartment.

Stealthily he approached the door, set a chair against it, mounted the chair, peered through the small interstice formed by a slight tilt of the transom, and looked again, his whole sinister soul in his eyes.

At a table, in an attitude of expectancy, sat a man—Adrian Burgoyne. He had taken off his glasses, and his eyes were in a line of direct inspection. A thousand times would Richard Sheldon have passed him on the street, and never would have so much as thought of a resemblance to Adrian Burgoyne, but now, his suspicions tinged with positive certainty, he recognised the inmate of room 47 as the lurker who had stared in at his library window; he traced the same expression of face that convict 407 had worn in his reproachful, accusing eyes, that far day in the long ago, when his influence and the perjured evidence of his allies had sent Adrian Burgoyne to a living tomb—the prison.

"Ah, at last!" suddenly ejaculated the man he was watching, springing to his feet as a quick step sounded in the hall without.

"It is he—Adrian Burgoyne! I know the voice. From the dead!—he is here!" muttered the startled watcher.

The door of the room opened. Bright-faced, buoyant, waving aloft a little square parcel, Mr. Detective Dean stepped into the apartment.

"What success?" projected Burgoyne palpitatingly.

"The best in the world! I've been down to Lynde; I saw Mrs. Loring; I've secured a clue, a precious, a solitary one, and upon *that* hinge all our hopes."

Dean drew the object he bore from its paper covering, and placed it against a book on the table, so that the lamplight irradiated its surface brightly.

Peering curiously, the eager Richard Sheldon saw that it was a photograph, and the innocent, wild-rose face looking up at the rapt Adrian Burgoyne was that of missing Patrice Ringold.

(To be continued.)

POSTAL RATES.

SHORT STORIES will be sent direct from these offices, post free, to any country within the Postal Union, at the following rates, prepaid:

One Year	6s. 6d.
Half Year	3s. 3d.
Three Months	1s. 8d.

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THERE is appearing in *PEARSON'S WEEKLY* at the present time a stirring war story from the facile pen of Mr. Louis Tracy. This story is one of absorbing interest. It deals with what may be justly regarded as the most momentous question of the hour. Can England afford to be isolated? In the event of war breaking out, could we withstand the combined attack of other Continental powers? A love story runs through the novel, and so readers of every disposition are catered for. The first great battle is fought off Worthing, where the combined French and German forces attempt to effect a landing. Britain succeeds in resisting the attack; the great foreign fleet is shattered; all danger of invasion is for a time over. A terrific engagement between the Mediterranean fleets takes place off Gibraltar, and again Great Britain asserts her rights as Mistress of the Seas. The Suez Canal is made impassable. Britain takes the initiative. An English force lands at Havre and another in the North of Germany. Both of these have Paris for their goal. Whether they reach their destination or not, future issues will decide.

TO EARN £100

Collect as many coupons as you can from **SHORT STORIES, PEARSON'S STORY TELLER,** and **PEARSON'S WEEKLY.** Keep them till the end of the year, and then send them along to Henrietta Street. The person who forwards the greatest number gets the **£100.** The **SHORT STORIES'** coupon is on the second page of cover, at the left-hand bottom corner.

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Buy a copy of **No. 2** of **PEARSON'S MAGAZINE,** and turn to page 232A.

A BIG BANK ROBBERY!

The issue of *SHORT STORIES* dated March 14th next will contain the opening chapters of an exciting serial story, entitled:

THE GREAT

MIDDLEWICK BANK ROBBERY:

THE STORY OF A MAN HUNT.

We give you ample notice of its appearance that you may put an order with your newsagent for a copy of this and subsequent issues.

Printed and Published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON, at "Pearson's Weekly" Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

HAVE YOU A POST CARD?

If not, please obtain one, and send it to the

PEARSON POTTERY CO., HANLEY,

with your name and address on the back, and you will receive by next post full particulars of the most wonderful package of crockery the world has ever seen.

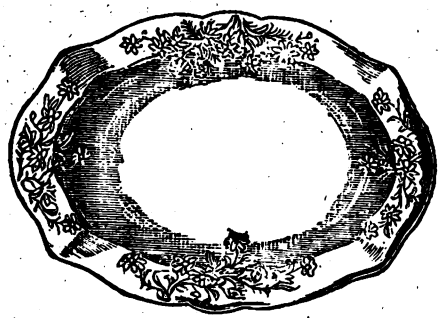
100 PIECES FOR £1 1s.

100 PIECES FOR £1 1s.

A Dinner Service of 50 pieces is included, which is guaranteed to be worth the guinea alone, and a China Tea Service of 28 pieces, finished in gold, together with a lot of useful kitchen crockery.

The Secret of the Success.—The Pearson Pottery Company are manufacturers, not middlemen, like many other advertisers. The Pearson Potteries have nearly 2,000ft. frontage to the town of Hanley.

Thousands Sold All Over the World. Everybody not only satisfied but amazed at the quantity and quality given.



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Readily Reduce Weight and Cure Corpulency Permanently by taking TRILENE TABLETS (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to PRESERVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of diet. Reduction begins immediately.

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A safe, rapid, and permanent reduction and improvement in health and breathing guaranteed. A special preparation kept for stubborn cases (either sex) which have resisted other treatment.

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1896 PROCLAMATION.

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Suitable for Sitting-room or Bedroom, Bordered and Woven in Art Colours, large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room, as an advertisement for our Goods, thus saving any Middle Profits. Remember these are woven, not printed, and are made of a material almost equal to Wool. Thousands of these Carpets and Rugs have already been sold at almost double the above prices. A Rug sent with Carpet, **10d.** extra.

SPECIAL OFFER—2 Carpets and 2 Rugs, 7s. 3d.

Value unequalled in the Annals of Advertising. As a favour, kindly examine and compare these Carpets.

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Rev. Canon Henderson
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Dean Carrington
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Ven. Archdeacon Wright
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Archdeacon of Ossory
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	Each.		Each.
6ft. by 9ft.	... 4/9	9ft. by 15ft.	... 12/6
7½ft. by 9ft.	... 5/11	12ft. by 12ft.	... 12/9
9ft. by 9ft.	... 7/6	12ft. by 13½ft.	... 14/6
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Cash returned in full if not satisfied.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 374. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 29TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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(Signed) F. HODGSON & SON.

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Telegraphic Address: "ECLIPSE, LEEDS," Telephone No. 948. N.B.—Foreign Orders executed and packed free, and shipped at lowest rates.

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I resolved to try them. After taking a few small boxes I lost all the painful symptoms, and now enjoy good health. Publish my statement as you please."

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Of all Medicine Vendors, at **1s. 1½d.** and **2s. 9d.** Post Free for P.O. or Stamps from

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CURED INSTANTLY BY

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Prevents Decay. Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented. Neuralgic Headache and all Nerve Pains Removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.

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Send at once for JUNO Catalogue, sent post free to any part of the world, interesting and valuable to all. METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS' CO., LTD., 75 and 76, Bishopsgate Without, London, E.C.

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Readily **Reduce Weight** and **Cure Corpulency Permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to **PRESERVE** both **HEALTH** and **FIGURE** without change of diet. **Reduction begins immediately.**

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For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 374.] For the Week ending February 29th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

THE CHARM IN ESTHER'S EYES.

SIX men were seated round a table at dinner. They had been discussing the Jews in London.

Stanwood was a specialist on the subject. "I know what I am talking about," he remarked somewhat irritably, for the men had been laughing at his theories. "There's not a man in this room who will go into six old-clothes' shops in the East-end that I can show him, price an overcoat, and come away without buying one. As I said before, I will wager a dinner on it."

"I don't see where the difficulty comes in," said Rochester. "I'll take the bet."

The following morning the six men were driving from Piccadilly to the East-end. Stanwood was directing the route. Presently, when they came to the Jewish quarter, they left the carriage, and walked down a bye-street. Mr. Rochester, as the morning was cold, was dressed in a rough travelling suit. He hailed from the country.

"Here we are," said Stanwood, and five men crossed the street, where they could watch Rochester unobserved.

* * * * *

Rochester has just passed under the arcade of trousers and vests in front of Funkenstein's when a little old man with a grey beard and sharp eyes seized his arm.

"I know vot you vand. You vand a shpring ofercoad, ain't id?"

"Have you got any spring overcoats?" asked Mr. Rochester.

"Haf I? Der finest in der vorld. Gome insite." And they went inside.

"Vot price?" asked Mr. Funkenstein.

"I'm not particular. I want something that will not show the dust."

"Rebecca, get down dem goods and don't be loafin' dere," said the vendor sharply. "I vouldn't show 'em to eferybody, my frient. (In a theatrical whisper.) Dese vas send to a frient py der Brince of Vales. Dey vas too schmall for him, und he gafe 'em to his man vat sold 'em. You don't gif it avay!" said Mr. Funkenstein, suddenly checking himself and staring suspiciously at Rochester, fearing that he had told too much.

"I will not," said Rochester.

"Dere now. Chust see dot," said the vendor admiringly, as he exhibited an overcoat which, in the dim light, looked perfectly new. It was faced with ostensible silk, and was of the latest cut.

"How much is it?" asked Rochester.

"£2 10s., vort £5 if it's vort anything."

Had it not been for the bet the bargain really would have been tempting. Mindful of his mission, however, Rochester shook his head and edged away.

"Holt on; vait a minid. I got all kinds of shpring ofercoads. Tventy dozen here and tventy cases upstairs. Maybe you don't like der colour? Vat colour you like? Prown? Veepin' Rachel, you ought to see der prown vons." And in a second he had conjured three from somewhere in different shades, and had one over Rochester's right arm and two in his hands.

"Take der middle vun. Fits your comblexion vonderful. Nefer seen vun fit a man's comblexion like dot. Chust your size."

Rochester found himself encircled with a tape round his chest.

"Vell! vell! vell!" cried Funkenstein, astonished.

"Vat ees it, Isaac?" screamed Rebecca, startled.

"Oh! vot a shplendid chest! Oh, coot cracious! You was a brize fighder, my frient. I tink so when you come in. Rebecca, is dot a brize fighder's ofercoad you got dere? Dry it on, my frient, dry it on."

Before Rochester could protest his arms were half way in the sleeves, and Rebecca and Isaac skilfully slipped it over his shoulders.

Rochester looked sheepish. He wished he was out of it. He seemed to be under some kind of an obligation to purchase an overcoat that he had not foreseen. He felt fatally sure that if he didn't get that overcoat off his back he would buy it. All this ran through his mind in the dark little shop while Isaac was bunching it up in the back and saying critically:

"Nefer seen anyding like id. Fits like it vos mate to orter."

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"Like der shkin on a sossitch," echoed Rebecca.

Rochester acted with decision. He took half-a-crown from his pocket, and said:

"Here, I—I have an appointment. This will pay you for your trouble."

He stripped off the coat, and fled in the temporary astonishment he had caused.

"Vy didn't he take der coat vit him?" said Rebecca, grinning at Isaac as she looked at the coin.

But Isaac was already outside, and had hooked another fish.

* * * * * *

Rochester felt that he needed time for reflection. He did not dare look in the direction of the five broad grins, which he felt sure were a short distance away. He lit a cigar and ruminated. He must keep the overcoat away from him; that was evident. This was the only conclusion reached when a voice said:

"I got id—£2."

It was Motzenhauser. Motzenhauser was pointing to an overcoat on a dummy. Motzenhauser had watched all the Funkenstein proceedings except the finale. He had agreed with Mrs. Motzenhauser that Rochester was from the country, and planned accordingly.

"Gome insite," said Motzenhauser.

Rochester hesitated. He wished to refuse, but it was part of the bet to enter.

"I had a son go oud to trade," said Mrs. Motzenhauser.

Rochester is polite to all women.

"Indeed," said he.

"Chacob Motzenhauser vos his name. He sold cowlar puttons und stud links; put now he has a pig shop. You know Chacob?"

Rochester thought he had met several Chacobs in his travels. But still denied it. He did not know what subtle logical sequence might lie between acquaintanceship with Chacob and buying a coat.

"Try dis on," said Motzenhauser, himself and wife grabbing the customer's hands.

He knew the dodge, and stepped backwards just in time.

"Thank you. I won't try it on," he said. "It's too—too light," he added, at a venture.

The mates to it in six darker shades were instantly forthcoming. Rochester felt that he had put his foot in it. He didn't know what to say.

"I mean it's too thin for the weather."

They held up their hands in astonishment, and waved them horizontally from the wrist-joint above their shoulders.

"Sufferin' Lazarus. Too thin?. Vy, you vear sometings heffier as dot and purn to a grisp."

"I'm not going to be in London," said Rochester.

"Vere you goin'?"

"To—to Greenland!"

He rushed out without more words.

* * * * * *

Motzenhauser and his wife stared at Rochester from the doorway, and made some kind of a sign to the street, for the street was watching intently wherever it was not occupied "inside." The sign meant that he was a crank. The street nodded, but still watched. The crank was going into Katzenyammer's. What would Katzenyammer do with him? That was the question.

Katzenyammer was the acknowledged king of the street. He would sell a suit of clothes to a wooden figure. He would sell a man a tin watch at the top price, and make him think he had got the Strasburg clock with the cathedral thrown in. What would Katzenyammer do with him? That was the question in which the street and five club-men were deeply interested.

But Katzenyammer's place showed no signs of life. It was either unheard of carelessness or a bold stroke of genius. The historian is able to state that it was the latter. Katzenyammer had not missed a point of the preceding encounter, and had his own theory. Rochester saw the neglected doorway, and argued favourably. He would not be very much bothered in that place, and he entered with a sigh of relief. It was half lighted like all of them. Katzenyammer was seated quietly smoking a long pipe. Two young men and a women were seated about, to bolster him up.

"I want to price an overcoat," said Rochester, thereby fatally committing himself.

"A sphring ofercoad?" asked Katzenyammer indifferently.

"Yes."

Katzenyammer did not move.

"Vot brice?" asked he.

"Anything under £3."

Katzenyammer smoked.

"Vat colour?"

Rochester was a little nettled. "Any neutral colour," said he. "Something that is light and will not show the dust."

Katzenyammer considered. "I don't tink," he began doubtfully, "you vouldn't come in here foolin' vit a man and takin' up his dime ven you didn't vand to puy no ofercoad, vould you?"

"Of course not," said Rochester angrily.

"Sow der chentlemen a coad, Simon," said Katzenyammer.

There were twenty-seven coats all answering the description Rochester had given, and all his size. He examined one and refused it. With another he did the same. Another would not do. Each time he had to find the faults. Each time he was looked at with suspicion. His ingenuity was taxed beyond its limits. He was at his wits' end. There were twenty-four overcoats still to battle with and pretend to find fault with. Rochester is conscientious. That is his weakness. He turned to silent Katzenyammer.

"I have changed my mind, and will not buy an overcoat to-day. I will, however, pay you for your trouble and time. How much is it?"

Katzenyammer knew it all the time. He smoked indifferently. His feelings were hurt.

"Vat's der brice of der coad, Simon?"

"£1."

Katzenyammer nodded at Rochester. Some people would not have done it, but Katzenyammer would have found a weak spot in them, as he did in Rochester. The latter handed him a sovereign, and then went meanly out.

* * * * * *

The street was amazed. Katzenyammer had missed him—wonder of wonders! The quintet was uneasy. Rochester's staying powers were a marvel entirely unexpected. Next door, however, all was excitement.

It was the chance of a lifetime, and Hammerschmidt rose to it. The sale was nothing. The prestige was all.

"K-vick! K-vick!" the old man cried in his excitement, as he drove the representatives of four generations into the back room. All depended on Esther. She alone could take the trick that Katzenyammer even had failed in.

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This door, too, was unattended. Rochester, with many misgivings, passed in.

As he stared about the half-lighted place his eyes fell on those of a girl of seventeen, who sat under a row of bell-bottom trousers hanging on the wall. They were beautiful eyes that met his view—large, lustrous, loving, and sad—the historic eyes of the Jewess of romance.

"I wish to price an overcoat," said Rochester gently.

"My father is not here, and I don't know the goods," said Esther with a troubled look.

"Oh, I expect you can find me something," said he relieved. "I'm not particular."

"Is it for winter?" she asked.

"Yes; such as they wear at the play. Do you ever go to the play in the winter time?" asked Rochester.

"I never have been, but I should like to go," said Esther.

She smiled. Her teeth were even and white. She was undeniably pretty. She walked well. Heredity had been kind to her. Twenty generations of pedlar's packs had curved her back not in the least. He watched her, for Rochester is artistic, as she fumbled among some overcoats. That red shawl and that head certainly formed a picture.

"Will you try this on?" she asked gently, holding it out to him.

It was the critical moment. Hammerschmidt was peeping through a crack in the door, and giving momentary bulletins to his wife. Every knot-hole in the ceiling had an eye to it, and there were several knot-holes. Funkenstein, Motzenhauser, and Katzenyammer, were all ill at ease, notwithstanding they had not all done badly. The street was in a painful state of suspense, and the quintet were betting wine in a trying state of doubt.

"If you will put it on for me," said Rochester tenderly.

Hammerschmidt's long breath of relief was audible in the shop, though foolish Rochester heeded it not. The agony was over. Esther would never let him get that coat off again. If she did he would disinherit her.

Dimpled hands raised the overcoat to his shoulders; warm fingers pressed it forward about his neck, and as they did so touched his cheek. Esther's purchases in the perfumery line were not imported, but as she buttoned the top button it seemed as if it was "Brisas de las Pampas" in the dark, heavy folds of her hair.

"Will it do?" she asked timidly. "I never tried before."

"Of course," said Rochester gallantly. Then he stopped. A look of consternation crept over his face, and he ground his teeth.

"Of course," he repeated, smothering the thought and smiling on the beautiful girl. "How much is it?"

Esther, with some difficulty, found the card on the starboard coat-tail, and said: "£3." Esther was not slow herself. He gave her the money and she thanked him gracefully.

"You say you'd like to go to the play this——"

"Esther-go-und-see-vat-time-der-teakettle-will-be-done-alreaty-don't-be-vaitin'-round-here-ven-dere's-no-tea-Esther-be-kvick-aboud-it!" yelled Hammerschmidt all in a breath, as he burst into the front shop.

She went like the startled fawn. Hammerschmidt did not look like an invitation to dinner, but had the inhospitable and biassed expression of a meat-axe. He looked as if he might have a great deal to say, but Rochester did not care for conversation. He bowed and went hurriedly out.

* * * * * *

As he came into the broad daylight with the overcoat on a yell sounded down the street. Five men roared, and slapped their thighs, and laughed like lunatics. The street looked at them in amazement. As Rochester went towards them they laughed harder and harder.

He had on an old melton overcoat, pale-green under the collar, faded grey in various shades in the skirt. It was frayed at the cuffs, worn out and sewed up at the buttonholes, and had a small patch on one of the sleeves.

"You needn't laugh," he said, with suppressed anger. "In fact, I won't have it," he added hotly. "I've lost the bet, and that's enough said."

They stopped laughing, but looked very queer. Now and then they inspected him furtively out of the corners of their eyes, as he took the lead, scowling. But there was imminent danger of explosion all the way back to the club.

H. J. W. D.

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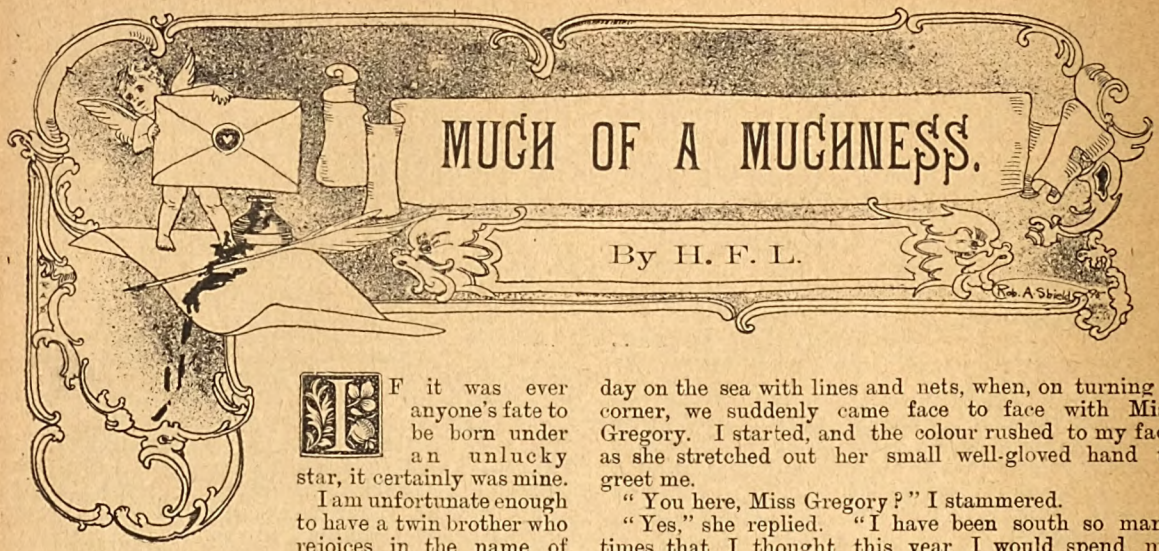

MUCH OF A MUCHNESS.

By H. F. L.

IF it was ever anyone's fate to be born under an unlucky star, it certainly was mine.

I am unfortunate enough to have a twin brother who rejoices in the name of William. We are alike as two pins—at least, so everybody tells us. I don't think so, however, for William is a happy-go-lucky sort of fellow, no good at anything, and always getting into scrapes for which I invariably get the blame; you can therefore naturally understand that I do not look upon it as an honour to be taken for my brother, although he has not the slighest objection to being mistaken for me.

As a matter of fact, I am slightly the taller, but the colour of our eyes and hair are the same, our faces have the same expression, and the tone of our voices is barely distinguishable.

In spite of the difficulties I used to get into through William's idle freaks and gossip, a strong feeling of brotherly love existed between us, and I am proud to say that feeling still exists to this day, in spite of the severe tests to which it has been put.

After leaving college we separated. My brother was articled to a firm of solicitors, and I started a weekly periodical in the south of Wales, which I am proud to say obtained a very fair circulation, and brought me in a very comfortable little income.

The ridiculous likeness between us seemed to increase year by year as time went on, instead of decreasing, and in self-defence I at last determined to cultivate a beard and moustache, and thus save myself from having the sins of my brother visited upon my own head.

We both welcomed the month of September, for it was then we took our holidays. We always spent them together, and enjoyed talking over the many jokes of the past which we had been able to play both at school and college, on account of our remarkable likeness to each other. William was therefore not at all surprised to receive from me one morning a letter, arranging for a trip to Scotland as soon as he could get away from his duties.

Three weeks later we might have been seen standing on one of the platforms in Edinburgh railway station, waiting for a train which was to convey us and our baggage to a small town on the east coast of Scotland, between Aberdeen and Montrose.

Late one evening, about a week after we had arrived, we were wending our way back to our hotel, carrying between us a large basket of fish, the result of a long day on the sea with lines and nets, when, on turning a corner, we suddenly came face to face with Miss Gregory. I started, and the colour rushed to my face as she stretched out her small well-gloved hand to greet me.

"You here, Miss Gregory?" I stammered.

"Yes," she replied. "I have been south so many times that I thought this year I would spend my holidays in Scotland; but I certainly never expected to meet you here. You never told me you were going north."

Miss Gregory and I had for some time past been very good friends, and it was only for my brother's sake that I was sorry I had come across her.

That evening after dinner I told my brother as nicely as I could that he was not to mind if I did not give up all my time to him, and the various excursions we had planned, as I had not calculated on coming across Clara. He grumbled a good deal at first, and made a few unkind remarks, which I do not for the moment believe he meant—something about his company not being good enough, and also about Clara, adding how thankful he was that I had not introduced him—for he had left us talking at the corner of the street, and had walked on to the hotel alone, taking the fish with him.

The following day was Thursday, that particular Thursday in September when the inhabitants of the small town repaired *en masse* to the large flat field north of the town to witness the Highland games and sports.

Of course, I took Clara, leaving William to look after himself, and succeeded in obtaining very good places inside the ring.

It was a glorious day; the sun shone brilliantly, and the strapping pipers in their many coloured plaids, drew forth stirring music from their bagpipes, and as each champion achieved some victory, or performed some great feat of strength, the applause was deafening, which proved the onlookers to be in high spirits.

I was thoroughly contented, basking in the sun by the side of Clara who was chattering away as only women can. Suddenly my eyes fell on a familiar figure, it was that of my brother Will, yes, there was no doubt about it, it was Will strolling about with a young girl who had lovely golden hair, which the sun seemed to turn into threads of that precious metal.

Had it not been that his face was turned towards me, and I saw it was clean shaven, I might have thought it was my ghost, for we each had on our College blazers, with ribbons on our white straw hats to match, and white flannel trousers, which had only that morning come back from the wash.

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I was about to point him out to Clara when I found he had disappeared in the crowd.

It seemed to get hotter and hotter, and I was glad to get what shade I could from the parasol of an old lady who was sitting behind me. The men selling iced drinks were doing a roaring trade, and I determined at the risk of losing my place to get some for my charge. so making some excuse about being cramped and rather stiff, I left her, thinking that refreshment would be all the more acceptable if it came as a surprise.

The crowd round the ice vendors was tremendous, and it was some time before I succeeded in obtaining what I required. I was successful at last, however, and then proceeded to make my way back, with an ice in one hand and some delicious looking fruit in the other, but it was not such an easy task as I anticipated.

The sports were still in full swing, and the throng round the inclosure seemed thicker than ever.

I well remember how fearfully pushed about and elbowed I got: everyone seemed to put themselves in my way. They would not give me a chance; in fact, they seemed to think that I was trying to push myself in front of them on purpose to obscure their view.

The ice soon melted, and to make matters worse some clumsy idiot pushed my arm and spilt the pink liquid—for it was originally a strawberry ice—all over my hitherto spotless white trousers, this annoyed me exceedingly, especially when I was informed on remonstrating that it was all through my own carelessness.

When at last I did get to my seat, I had only, besides the empty ice-glass, a squashed peach left, this I was with many apologies about to offer Clara when to my dismay, I observed her seat was empty, and that she was nowhere to be seen.

I searched up and down, and made inquiries, but no one could tell me what had become of her, and at last, the sports having come to an end I was, with the crowd, swept out of the field.

It was not long before I was at No. 19 T—— Street, where I knew my little woman was staying, I rang at the bell, and sent up my card. Imagine therefore my surprise when the servant returned with a message to say that Miss Gregory would not see me, and that she would be glad if I would not trouble to call again.

I met my brother in the hall of the hotel as I entered, he was in high spirits, and began discussing the events of the afternoon, but I pretended not to hear, and pushing past him, went up to my room.

It was at dinner that evening the truth suddenly dawned upon me. Clara must have become impatient while I was away getting the refreshments and have left her seat to look for me. She then in all probability caught sight of my brother walking about with Miss Wilson, to whom he had been introduced by a friend, and had mistaken him for me, though had she seen his face she would have perceived her error, for he boasted of no beard or moustache.

I endeavoured to console myself by explaining to my brother how matters stood, but he only laughed, and looked upon the whole affair as a first-rate joke. Seeing, however, that I was annoyed, he good-naturedly undertook to do anything in his power to help me, and I promised that should an opportunity occur, I should not fail to avail myself of his offer.

How many cigarettes we smoked that evening, trying to find a way out of my difficulty, I should not like to say, but Will finally decided that, as it was indirectly through him that I had lost my lady love, it should be through him that I would get her back again. I did not see how the affair was going to be managed, but being assured by him that it would turn out all right, I left the matter in his hands.

Next morning, by Will's orders, I packed up my goods and set out by the 10.30 train on my return journey to Wales, vowing never again to set foot in Scotland.

It was about a year after the event recorded above that, on looking through my paper one morning, my eye was caught by the announcement of an engagement between Miss Gregory and my brother Will. I could scarcely believe my eyes, and in my rage took the next train to London, and hunted up my brother.

I found him in his rooms, he having just got back from his office, and at once demanded an explantion from him. I was in a towering rage.

"Calm yourself, my dear fellow," he began; "I am simply working to fulfil my promise that as it was through me you lost Clara, it should be through me you regained her."

"I do not understand you," I stammered; "your marrying her will make it practically impossible. How am I to ever hope of winning her when she is your wife?"

"My what?"

"Your wife."

"My dear fellow, I am not going to marry her. I never had the least intention of doing so."

"I don't understand you," I gasped. "What does this mean?" and I handed him the paper which contained a notice of the engagement.

"That? Why that's the announcement of *your* engagement—not mine."

And then he explained how he had won her for my sake, and that all I had to do, if I wished to marry her, and free him, was to shave off my beard, and change my name from Henry to William.

* * * * * *

A month later I was married to Clara. To this day she believes I am William, and I am not going to shake her belief.

My brother is proud of having kept his word, and also of the beard and moustache which he has lately cultivated, and he tells me—I believe to console himself—that he would not change places with me for all the Claras in the world.

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WHEN THE BIRDS BEGIN TO SING.

By WINIFRED GRAHAM. *Author of "Through the Valley," "Six First-Class Passengers," etc.*

SUMMARY.

Philip Roche marries Eleanor Grebby, daughter of a farmer, and they spend their honeymoon on the Continent. On their return to Richmond, Eleanor becomes friendly with a frivolous widow, Mrs. Mounteagle, against her husband's wishes. She is introduced to Carol Quinton, who fascinates her. Her husband is heart-broken, and consults his cousin, Erminie Henderson, who comes to stay with them. Eleanor's parents come to spend a day or two with her, and disgust Mrs. Mounteagle with their homeliness.

CHAPTER IX.

HEART SICK AND WEARY WITH THE JOURNEY'S FRET.

"You must *not* go to-day," declares Eleanor emphatically, addressing her parents. "I want to take you to Mrs. Mounteagle's party this afternoon. I am sure she won't mind, we are such *great* friends, and two more will make no difference in a tea and coffee, four-to-seven squash."

"Is it a real grand party?" asks Mrs. Grebby.

"Oh, yes; no end of people have been invited, and Giddy's affairs are always so *chic*—that meaning stylish, smart—all sorts of grand dresses and bonnets. The good, innocent-minded girls wear big hats, with huge brims and fluffy feathers, and the wicked married women have the tiniest bonnets, sparkling with jet or passementerie, and their veils fastened by diamond stars."

Mrs. Grebby gasps in wonderment. "I will lend you two jewelled pins for your head gear, Ma—one of turquoise and another in the shape of an olive—that Philip bought abroad, and declares is only paste."

"Well, we *shall* be swells," says Mr. Grebby, grinning, "and my word, what a lot we'll have to talk about when we gets 'ome."

"Yes, and you will sit with Farmer Briggs till goodness knows how late," replies Eleanor, "smoking and drinking, and chatting, till he is blue in the face with astonishment, and his eyes nearly dropping out of his head."

"Telling of Ma going into Society," he continues, "and me dressed up as a toff, conversationalling with Lady MacDonald."

"What a lovely idea!" cries Eleanor. "I will write at once to Giddy, and tell her to expect you."

The intense happiness these old people have brought into Eleanor's life is quite pitiful to see. Old memories re-awaken, the gaiety of childhood is hers again as she plays with Rover and talks with "Dad."

Oh, the wild excitement of showing them her treasures, rummaging in the plate-box, and spreading every ornament from her jewel-case on her blue silk quilt, and trotting Mrs. Grebby panting from the cellars to the attic.

It is exhilarating, delightful! Philip, too, is kind and hospitable, never smiling at the odd mistakes the good-natured Grebbys are apt to make.

"There," says Eleanor, shutting down an envelope and ringing for Sarah, "I have written the note to Giddy."

She whistles Rover through the window, who is scratching up the lawn, with splendid energy.

He bounds in and leaps on the sofa. Eleanor proceeds to scratch his back comfortingly with a little ivory hand on the end of a long horn stick. Then she calls for a comb, which Sarah produces, and fluffs at his coarse hair, which is stiff, wiry, and grey.

"Mrs. Mounteagle has called to see you," says a voice in the doorway, when Rover's toilette (which has occupied a full half-hour) is eventually completed.

"Oh! show her in."

"But," with a glance at Mr. and Mrs. Grebby, "if you please, ma'am, she asked to speak to you alone."

"I hope Herr Wieder, the violinist, has not failed. He had an affection of the bronchial tubes last week, but that does not sound on the violin."

Eleanor closes the folding doors between her boudoir and the library.

"You stay here, darlings," she says in a soft, cooing voice, "and I

Flaunts it to Giddy's presence.

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will see Giddy in the next room. Come on, Rover—down, old boy—your wet paws have done damage enough to my gown for one morning."

Still whistling, Eleanor saunters into Giddy's presence, her eyes as radiant as stars, her lips parted in joyous greeting.

"You dear thing," she cries, "to come and see me, when you must be so busy, pinning bits of drapery over your doors, and heaping flowers into enormous vases. Can I come in and help? I am splendid at decorations, you know," remembering Giddy's cynical remarks on her artistic efforts, and laughing merrily.

"No, dear, all is prepared," speaking in funereal tones. "*But*——"

"Well?"

Giddy's eyes shift uneasily. Then she speaks straight out: "I *can't* have your people! My dear child, it would be madness—positive madness, both to yourself and to me. There, there, don't look so blank; one would think I had suggested murdering good Mrs. Grebby and her dear fat husband. Can't you see it, Eleanor? You have a good position in Richmond, and you want to take it and fling it into the river, as it were. You want to flaunt your parentage at my party before everyone."

"Yes," says Eleanor firmly; "I am not ashamed of them, it is not in me to be ashamed. What is wrong with them?"

Giddy's mouth curves, her little foot taps impatiently on the floor at Eleanor's defiant attitude.

"You *must* see, or are you utterly blind—utterly imbecile? Now, child, take my warning—shunt the old people at once—trundle them off the London junction—send them puffing back in a slow train to the country—tell them never to enter Lyndhurst again—keep them out of Richmond. It was terrible yesterday—a scene I shall never forget. Lady MacDonald was so sweet over it, though I could see she was petrified."

"I don't understand you," mutters Eleanor, pale and trembling. "If you have come here to insult me——"

"Tut, tut! Don't be silly. But I am bitterly disappointed in you. I have taken so much pains over your social education. But you are like a girl in iron stays, the moment you remove the support (which is my guiding hand) you go flop! Now don't turn rusty, or cry," as tears of passion well into Eleanor's eyes. "I want you at my party—I want youth and beauty, for I have a reputation for producing lovely women, good-looking men, and distractingly sweet girls. Carol has promised to come early, now, for one, you would not like him to see your relations."

"Yes, I should," she replies. "He would not mind, *he* is a gentleman!"

"I cannot have them, anyhow," declares Giddy firmly. "You may be offended, for I have spoken plainly——"

"A great deal too plainly," retorts Eleanor fiercely. "You have not spared my feelings. You think yourself very grand, but my parents would not have hurt anyone as you have hurt me to-day! You sneer at them—hold them up to ridicule—while they are worth all the dressed-up Lady MacDonalds you toady to!"

Her voice has risen shrilly; she forgets the folding doors.

"Enough!" says Giddy, tossing her head. "I suffered at your hands yesterday. Pray spare me the effort of argument. Remember I have to entertain, and must reserve my strength. Besides, it is so vulgar to quarrel."

Eleanor walks haughtily to the door and flings it open.

"If I talk any more I shall stifle," she says.

Giddy gives a low laugh.

"You will agree with me when you get over your temper," she declares, passing out.

Eleanor sinks on her knees, and buries her head on Rover's shaggy coat. She is alone, and the faint sound of buried sobs throbs upon the silence of the room.

The dog licks her hands and whines. Slowly the folding doors push open, and the old couple stand upon the threshold.

Mr. Grebby's round face is pale, Mrs. Grebby's cheeks wet with fast falling tears.

"Oh! dearie, dearie," she cries, folding Eleanor in her arms. "We ought not to 'ave come, we didn't know. But she was right, dearie, and we will go away, and you shall have your party and your friends. Oh! we was wrong, all wrong."

"Oh, dearie, dearie!"

"Don't talk like that," moans Eleanor, realising they have overheard. "She is a wicked snob—a—a—"

"There, dearie, be calm, don't fret."

"I will never forgive her," Eleanor stammers. "I love you and I hate Giddy."

She kisses Mrs. Grebby's damp cheeks, talking between her sobs. "It was not true, not one word of it, she just said it all to be disagreeable. She likes me to be miserable. I don't believe she ever had any parents of her own—I mean, not what you call parents. Some say she was born in a workhouse, a caravan, or an east-end doss. Though how she managed to be what she is they can't explain. I thought she was nice, mammy. I called her my friend. I tried to be like her," shuddering at the recollection. "Oh! don't go away," taking them each by the hand.

"Thank you, my girl, thank you," murmurs Mr. Grebby, "but Ma and I are better at Copthorne. We are not fit for Society; some day you will come back to the old 'ome and see us, won't you? and we'll all be happy again together."

Eleanor and Mrs. Grebby dry their tears, while Mr. Grebby pats them both on the back cheerily. Rover fawns round, barking and wagging his tail.

Philip, who is staying late from town this morning in

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honour of his guests, enters the room. "What is the matter?" he asks, looking at Eleanor's wistful face.

"I am not going to Mrs. Mounteagle's party," she says.

"Well, never mind. You can send your frock round," he cries jokingly, "and ask her to put it on a chair with a label: 'This is what Mrs. Roche would have worn had she been here.'"

But his chaff is received in silence. Then he notices for the first time the red rims round her eyes.

"Why, little woman, you have been crying!"

"Yes," murmurs Eleanor, "I have quarrelled with Giddy."

Then between them the three explain as best they can what has happened.

Philip is deeply interested.

"It was all our mistake," whimpers Mrs. Grebby. "We are that sorry; we wouldn't 'ave come. We really didn't guess what an upset it would make—parting friends, and bringin' trouble on our darling."

"Do not regret it," says Mr. Roche, taking her hand. "Such friends are not worth having, and Eleanor is well rid of them."

Secretly he blesses the Grebbys for their timely appearance, and resolves to write to Erminie and inform her of the fact.

"We are goin' back this morning," continues Mrs. Grebby. "Harriet expects us, and is reserving a front room in her lodging house. There, dearie," as Eleanor protests, "don't take on; we'd best go."

"Yes, Ma's right, my girl; Ma's always right," adds Mr. Grebby, with an admiring glance at his wife.

There are more tears before the final parting, when Eleanor watches them drive away with her husband, who has promised to escort them to town, and put them safely in a cab.

"Mind you see they go comfortably to Cousin Harriet's," she says before he leaves. "No wandering about seeking omnibuses, carrying bags, and leading Rover."

They wave farewell. Giddy sees them from her window driving down the terrace.

"My words have carried good weight," she thinks. "Eleanor has shunted those objectionable bumpkins after all."

When they were gone Eleanor puts on her hat and cloak, and sallies forth in the chill wintry air.

She enters the telegraph office, and addresses a form to Carol Quinton.

"Don't go to G's party this afternoon. Come to Lyndhurst instead.—E."

Then she walks back up the hill, a strange thrill of exhilaration rushing over her.

"Good looking men at her parties," she says to herself. "Carol has promised to come early, has he? We shall see.'

A little bundle of sad silk drapery.

The house seems dull and depressing without the old people or Rover. Philip is sure to stay late in the City, having spent most of the morning at home, and since she has no engagement. Thus Eleanor eases her conscience and waits expectantly for Carol.

Her drawing-room with its bright log fire looks cosy in the extreme as Mr. Quinton enters it that afternoon.

Eleanor is curled up on the sofa, a little bundle of sad silk drapery. Her eyes are wistful, her tea-gown is black.

The dim light reveals not the slight *soupçon* of powder paling her features. She barely rises to greet him, only moving to a sitting posture, her feet still tucked under her, holding out a trembling hand. As the door closes, he grasps the pink fingers and presses them to his lips.

"Don't," with a reproachful glance from under her long fringed lashes, "that is not kind."

"But they are such tempting fingers," he whispers apologetically.

"Come, draw up that chair and sit beside me like a doctor, only I want you to heal my sorrows. I have got such a horrid wound *here*," pressing her heart. "But first of all, was I wrong to telegraph? Are you angry, Mr. Quinton?"

"It was delightful of you," he murmurs, looking down on her with all his eyes. "Dear Mrs. Roche, I thank you from my soul. Only let me be your confidant—your friend!"

"Have you been to Giddy's?" she asks eagerly.

"No, what do you take me for? Was I not commanded to come here instead?"

"Giddy is no longer my friend; she has treated me abominably—snubbed and insulted me in my own house, simply because I wanted to bring my parents to her stupid party. They are the dearest old people from the country, not gifted with her false Society airs. I was only a farmer's daughter, you know. She taunted me with meeting you at her house and being ashamed of my parents. Bah! it sickens me."

She flung her head back with an air of offended dignity, her eyes flashing at the remembrance of Giddy's stinging phrases.

"The impudent little fiend!" mutters Quinton through his teeth. "How dare she?"

"Oh, she dares very well. I am in mortal terror of her tongue. We are utterly at the mercy of our friends; these people call themselves friends, though they deal us the bitterest cuts, the cruellest contumely."

"How *dare* she?" he repeats again, a fierce expression clouding his brow. "To attack a poor little thing like you, and for such a reason——"

"It was very hard—it made me cry," nodding her head and gazing earnestly upon him.

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"How bewitching she looks in the slim black robe," he thinks. It clings round her elegant figure, and contrasts with her fair hair and delicate colouring.

"What can I do to comfort you?" he says, drawing nearer.

"Stay away from Giddy—take my part. Stand up for me when you hear her or Lady MacDonald laughing over Mrs. Roche's relatives."

"They would never dream of taking your name in vain while I was there to defend it!" he cries. "Don't you know I would do anything in the world for you? Can't you see how I would willingly be your slave? Will you accept me as such? Use me as you will! When in trouble, call me; I shall be always ready. No woman has ever exercised the influence over me that you have done. I would give my whole life to serve you for a moment—to tie the lace of your shoe—to sit at your feet—and adore——"

His lavish devotion pleases Eleanor. A flush of pleasure peeps through the white skin, her eyes droop, her breathing quickens.

"I think my life will be better, brighter, nobler, for the knowledge of such unselfish friendship. I can be but a poor friend to you, I am neither influential nor particularly attractive. Only a very simple little woman living very much in herself."

"Mr. Roche is a good deal away, isn't he?"

"Yes, especially in the day time. I am very lonely sometimes. But how dark it is growing. Shall I ring for a light?"

"No," with an imploring gesture, "this is the hour to dream, and to see more clearly into other natures, to reveal secrets that cannot be left unknown for ever."

He grasps her hands, and kneeling beside her buries his head in the folds of her long black sleeves.

"Oh! love—my love!" he gasps.

CHAPTER X.

Falser than all Fancy Fathoms.

"What are you going to do to-day?" asks Philip, kissing Eleanor before he leaves.

"I must run up to town to have my dress fitted," she replies.

"What, more new frocks?"

"Only a very simple evening rag, dear," speaking nervously. "I am rather anxious about it, because it is the first I have had since my trousseau without Giddy's supervision. She always designs them, and does the talking."

"And pockets the commission," says Philip drily. "Do not regret that lost acquaintance, little one. If Mrs. Mounteagle opened your eyes, don't you allow her to shut them again."

"You will lose your train if you stand talking."

Philip drives away down the hill, and Eleanor thinks regretfully of the pleasant times she used to spend chatting with Giddy.

Now she must go to town alone. Eleanor is quite weary of her own society by the time she arrives at Madame Faustine's in Bond Street.

She wonders if Carol received the little note she penned in such trepidation yesterday, imploring him to spare her the passionate scenes in which he indulged the previous evening. She asked him in the most pathetic terms never to cross her path in life again, because she was only a weak little woman, and ended by saying she would be at 19, Bond Street, the next morning, and hoped not to run across that horrid Mrs. Mounteagle.

As she is bowed out by an elegant maiden in black satin, a hand is laid on her arm, a sense of exhilaration possesses her, while Mr. Quinton's melodious voice whispers "Eleanor" in her ear.

"I asked you not to," she says feebly, ill concealing her pleasurable surprise.

"But you laid temptation in my way, and it was strong," he answers.

She recalls his passionate words breathed in the firelight,

"Oh! love—my love!"

the words that held her paralysed, and seemed in a single syllable to divorce her from her husband.

"What are we going to do?" asks Carol.

"*We!* I must return to Lyndhurst and boredom. An old lady at Twickenham Park has asked me to tea this afternoon, and I have to interview a kitchen-maid at half-past two."

Her voice is a little hard, there is a ring of sarcasm and rebellion in it that is strange to Eleanor.

"Have you ever been to the Savoy?"

"No."

"Let us lunch there; it is past one," urges Carol Quinton.

He hails a hansom, though Eleanor is reluctant.

"I really can't," she whispers.

"There is no harm, dear," he replies persuasively.

The cabman is watching her; she feels confused, uncertain.

Then his influence is too strong, and Eleanor succumbs.

Where is the harm? She is a married woman, she can go if she pleases.

He helps her into the hansom, and they spin away.

"Do you remember last time we drove together," he asks.

"Yes, from the Butterflies' Club."

"It was dark then, Eleanor."

Her eyes droop, an embarrassed flush dyes her cheek.

"I am Mrs. Roche," she stammers.

"But 'Eleanor' is such a beautiful name, so queenly. You have poisoned all my happiness since the fatal night when I first saw you."

"I would willingly give it back, every shred of shattered joy, if I could."

"You could if you would."

"How?"

"By being kind, by taking me back to favour, and forgiving me."

"It looks as if I had done that already."

"But only in a hesitating, half-hearted manner."

"It is far easier for me to forgive," says Eleanor, "than for you to accept my forgiveness and not err again."

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There is silence between them for some moments.

"If I could think you cared for me just a little, Eleanor, I would be a better man."

"No," she said, biting her lips, and struggling with intense emotion; "you must reform without my aid—it will be harder, and therefore nobler. I do *not* 'care' for you."

He sees the efforts these words are costing her.

"I don't believe that, Eleanor."

"Then in disbelieving me you put me on a par with a common liar," she says hotly.

"Oh, no," he replies with his wan smile; "it is one of 'the social lies that warp us from the living truth.'"

They are turning into the Savoy courtyard.

Eleanor alights, half pleased, half frightened at her daring.

She feels very strange as she enters the huge restaurant with Carol.

It is a full day, and he points her out several celebrities as they pass to their table.

"This is the one, sir," says the waiter, "for two," removing an engaged card on Eleanor's plate.

"How was this table reserved for us?" she asks Mr. Quinton. "We seemed expected."

"I wired for it this morning," he answers tenderly. "I knew you would be in town, and I meant you to come!"

"It is very wrong of me," she sighs, and her eyes glisten as if washed by still rains under her lashes. "Do you know, I have a calendar in my room, and every morning I pull off a leaf to read the motto. I have just remembered the quotation for to-day."

"What was it?" he asks

Eleanor bends her head over her *hors d'œuvre*.

"The stately flower of female fortitude—of perfect wifehood."

Eleanor alights.

"Ah!" he sighs, "Tennyson."

"Yes," says Mrs. Roche.

Her eyes glance round the room.

How many bright eyes glisten over their champagne, and merry tongues joke and laugh away the hours!

"I like to look at people and make histories of them," says Eleanor.

"That girl with the flaxen hair, next to the dark man on your right, was a ballet girl before she married Sir Frederick Thurston. Everybody prophesied that her high kick would lift her into the aristocracy when she first gained favour. Her name was Poppy Poppleton, and people think she poisoned her husband and let another woman swing for it."

"Why do you tell me these horrible things," murmurs Eleanor. "They are not conducive to appetite."

"Forgive me, but you started by being morbid, quoting at me in fact, and you look so distractingly lovely when you are shocked."

"To tell a woman she is lovely is to criticise her openly to her face. Please do not make such a careful perusal of my expression."

"Unfortunately I am endowed with the critical faculty."

The very intonation of Quinton's voice is a caress.

His eyes seem to reveal, as they gaze on her, their power of insight and analysis. Their look is appreciation, their sympathy with her every utterance boundless.

To him she is not only a character study, but a woman to love, to worship, for a day, an hour.

To her he is an object of fascination, an accomplished man of the world, one who can make himself utterly irresistible by reason of his tenderness, chivalry, courtesy, and devotion.

A magnetic attraction rises between them. Eleanor forgets her surroundings. She only remembers him.

At last her eyes fall on the door, and remain transfixed in that direction.

Giddy Mounteagle, in a costume of wide black and white stripes and leopard's skin cloak, followed by her youthful *fiancé*, enters the restaurant.

"Bad luck!" exclaims Eleanor, turning to Carol; "look!"

He re-echoes her deep sigh as Giddy advances.

"I hate her seeing me here with you," Mrs. Roche declares. "She is a bad enemy, and now that we are hardly on speaking terms I dare not think what horrible stories she may not spread against me."

"Why not make it up, for the sake of our friendship, Eleanor? She could often help us to meet, you know?"

"Never, after the way she treated me!" declares Mrs. Roche, drawing herself up as Mrs. Mounteagle approaches.

"Hulloa! *you* here?" she cries in rather a bantering, insolent tone, and raising her finely pencilled eyebrows till they are lost to view under her fringe. She pats Carol playfully on the shoulder, pretending not to notice the stiffness of Eleanor's bow.

Bertie shakes hands with Mrs. Roche, and they seat themselves at the next table.

Eleanor turns her back, and becomes deeply interested in what Carol is telling her. They talk loudly on politics for Giddy's benefit.

"How spiteful she looked," whispers Eleanor at last.

"Oh, I don't know. You see you gave her the cold shoulder a bit."

"Do you think she noticed it?"

"Rather. She is as sharp as a needle."

"I think her hat is atrocious. It makes me tremble when I remember how I relied on her taste. Those enormous black and white feathers, pinned in crazy fashion with paste brooches, are horribly vulgar."

"Do you see that red-headed man just coming in?" says Carol.

"Yes. Who is he?"

"Eccott—a tremendously wealthy man, and a great financier. I expect your husband knows him."

"Eccott—why, of course! I have often heard Philip speak of him. The name is quite familiar to me, and now

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"Phillip Roche is here!"

I come to think of it he is living here at the Savoy. Philip often dines with him."

"And lunches?" asks Quinton hastily.

Eccott is speaking to the head waiter, and evidently looking for a friend.

Eleanor can see down the long passage. Suddenly her heart sinks; the palms of her hands grow cold.

"Philip is there!" she says under her breath.

"What will you do?" whispers Quinton.

"I—I don't know."

"Tell Giddy," he urges; "make the quarrel up now, take her into your confidence, pretend you are together."

"Place myself in her hands? Oh, Carol, it would be too humiliating!"

Involuntarily she calls him by his Christian name.

"Self-justification is so embarrassing and unsatisfactory, and some excuse must be made for our appearing here together, unless you take my advice. He has not seen you yet, there is still time."

Thus Quinton urges the unwilling Eleanor to follow his suggestion.

"But I can't," she declares, half crying. "What will Giddy think of me? What will she say?"

"Shall I speak to her for you?"

"Oh! if you only would."

Philip is still talking outside in the passage to Mr. Eccott.

Carol rises, leans over the back of Mrs. Mounteagle's chair whispering hurriedly:

"Philip Roche is here. I don't want him to see his wife with me. Take her under your wing. I will make it worth your while."

Giddy takes the cue instantly. Such compromising situations are not new to her. She is a Machiavelli in petticoats.

"Here, Bertie," she says, "slip into Eleanor's chair, and stop at that table with Mr. Quinton."

She turns, smiles benignly upon Mrs. Roche, and motions her to take the empty seat.

"There, my dear," she murmurs, as Eleanor, confused and ashamed, obeys. "Let bygones be bygones, you are with me to-day. I brought you up to town."

"No, you met me by chance at Madame Faustine's, and we came on here together. Oh! Giddy, how good you are."

"A friend in need, eh? Finish Bertie's fruit salad. Good gracious, you are drinking whiskey and soda. Pass me his glass, it won't matter for me."

Eleanor hands it over with trembling fingers.

Philip is well in the room now, and any moment may see them.

"Would it not look well to attract his attention; sign to him? He is bound to spot you in a minute. Here is the waiter, we will send him. Waiter! go and ask that tall gentleman to come here. Say two ladies wish to speak to him."

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Mr. Roche advances in surprise. He is vastly annoyed to find his wife again in company with Mrs. Mounteagle.

"You did not expect to see me, Philip," she says, assuming an air of gaiety to cover her confusion.

"I discovered your wife at our mutual costumier in Bond Street," cries Giddy. "I know she always starves herself when shopping alone in town, so persuaded her to make a good lunch with me. I have known her exist a whole day on prawns and ices, or Bath buns with lemonade. So you owe me a debt of gratitude, Mr. Roche. We are lucky in having run across you, and two other friends," as Philip's eyes fall on Carol Quinton, and the insipid Bertie. "We are simply gobbling our food whole, as we are going to the International Fur Store. I want to try and get a muff of leopard's skin to match my cape, for which, alas! I have still to write a cheque. But we are keeping you standing, and Mr. Eccott is waiting for his guest."

"Don't be late home, Eleanor," he says, "it gets very cold and foggy, and you still have a cough."

The two women watch him move away, then their eyes meet.

"You are a brick, Giddy," gasps Mrs. Roche, squeezing her hand under the table. "What makes you so splendidly loyal to me?"

"Life is so short, dear, it is well to be kind when we can. Besides, I am very fond of you though we did quarrel. I think it will draw us closer together."

"She lied to me—you lied to me!"

"I shall never forget what you have done for me to-day."

As the four friends leave the restaurant Carol Quinton bends over Giddy, and says sincerely:

"Bravo! and thanks a thousand times. You acted to perfection."

"Glad you think so," she replies in an undertone; "and, my friend, *you* can go to the fur store now, and settle my little account."

She pointed to her cloak as she spoke, and added saucily:

"The muff can stand over till the next time."

* * * * * *

"So you have made it up with the Mounteagle woman," says Philip that evening, pulling fiercely at his moustache.

"Well, you see, it was *so* difficult not to, meeting at the dressmaker's. I can't describe to you how awkwardly I was placed. I have felt more uncomfortable to-day than I have done for years. She practically took me by storm, and was so kind and nice it quite touched me. I have gone back to my old opinion of her. She may be a little hot tempered, but means well."

"It is a thousand pities. I hoped you had done with her for good. I don't like you going to the Savoy with her dressed up in that gaudy fashion. She looks quite remarkable and unladylike. Besides that fellow Quinton is always at her heels, and I have heard some strange things about him. But then he is just the style of man people like the widow affect."

"What have you heard about Mr. Quinton?"

"Oh, never mind; nothing for your ears, my dear."

"Here is the post," says Eleanor with a sigh of relief. She is glad for the introduction of letters to turn the subject.

"Only one for me," turning the envelope over. "I really dare not open it."

"Why? Who is it from?"

"That insatiable Madame Faustine. It will be the bill for my black tea-gown and the blue silk blouse that you admired so much, Philip, dear. Now you may have this letter, and pay it yourself if you are awfully good," laughing merrily. "I will give you the number of sovereigns in kisses."

She looked so pretty as she handed it him that he tore it open leniently, but no bill fell out.

The letter ran thus:

MADAM,—I am writing to ask you a personal favour, with regard to Mrs. Mounteagle, who kindly introduced me to you. I was prevented mentioning it to you to-day by the presence of my assistant. Could you induce Mrs. Mounteagle to remit me a portion, at least, of her long outstanding account? She has not been lately to our establishment, and I cannot get my letters answered. I thought perhaps you might use your influence, and oblige me very greatly.

Yours respectfully,

LOUISE FAUSTINE.

"A thousand devils!" cried Philip, crushing the letter in his hand. "She lied to me—*you* lied to me!"

(To be continued.)

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No. 3 ON SALE FEBRUARY 29TH.

HERE ARE A FEW OF THE MANY INTERESTING FEATURES IT CONTAINS:

Stories by Stanley J. Weyman, Robert Barr, F. Frankfort Moore, etc., etc.; "The Bravest Deed I Ever Saw," by Lady Henry Somerset; Leaders of London Society, Illustrated by Photographs; The Chapel of Bones; First Attempts at Photography, etc., etc.

THE NUMBER IS LUXURIOUSLY ILLUSTRATED THROUGHOUT BY THE BEST ARTISTS OF THE DAY.

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A Judas Kiss.

THE northern plains of Siberia were experiencing a far more vigorous winter than usual, even for that latitude. The snow, fanned by a strong northern gale, fell in wild, curling eddies across the ice-bound, desolate plains, wrapping the wooden houses of the convict mining station of O—— in a feathery mantle of immaculate white.

In one of these houses nearest the mine dwelt the head of the settlement, by name Nicholas Ozaski, and his daughter Feodora. The latter, when our tale opens, was sitting beside a roaring fire in her home, while on the opposite side of the hearth was a young Cossack lieutenant, tall and strikingly handsome, so much so, indeed, that his face had won for him the cognomen of Handsome Boris.

Boris Xerinka had been at O—— for the space of one week only, and yet Feodora had become to him what the pipe is to the habitual smoker, viz., he could not live without her; such was the result of five days' reasoning with himself, but Feodora, who was quite accustomed to receive homage, did not or would not understand that he expected her to offer him any; moreover, for some unaccountable reason, she had conceived a rooted antipathy for him, a dislike which at first was generated by a shifty expression which seemed to lurk behind his bright blue eyes, as well as by the downward curve of his handsome mouth, which would have better graced a woman's face than that of a man.

For some time the two occupants of the room had remained silent, watching the glowing embers, then Feodora, raising her head, glanced at Boris, and said:

"My father told me that another band of those poor wretches was expected here to-day. Is that so?"

"Yes," replied Xerinka, "it is true, Feodora, and they ought to have been here eight hours ago!"

"Doomed to the mines," she cried in a dull voice, as though speaking to herself. "Poor creatures! I wonder their hearts do not stop beating when they hear their sentence; but yet they live on, only dimly conscious of the worse than death which awaits them. The tales of those who have escaped from this Russian prison land cannot portray the fearful fate into which they march. But alas! when they arrive they experience the grim realism of those tales. Ah, how I wish I had never left St. Petersburg."

A moment's silence followed this heartfelt ejaculation, then Boris said gently:

"Feodora, would you be pleased if you knew you were about to return to Russia's capital?"

"*Pleased!*" She rose from her chair in surprise. "Pleased were but an empty name for the *joy* I should experience. Are—are we leaving here?"

"Well, your father has not quite decided," was the answer. "I have received orders which recall me to St. Petersburg eight days hence, and—Feodora, you could leave here as my wife!"

For a second she looked coldly at him, and then in a loud voice she said:

"Do you jest?"

"No, by Heaven, I am in deadly earnest! Feodora, I have not known you long, but just a week—and yet when I received my orders this morning I cursed them, for it would necessitate my leaving O—— and *you!* but I must obey the Tsar, and I cannot bear to part, perhaps for ever, with you!"

She relented on hearing his earnest tone of voice, and said more gently:

"Have you thought of my father?"

"He has consented."

"Indeed! It is very kind of him to do so, I am sure," she continued sarcastically. "But what if I in my turn say no?"

Boris clutched the arms of his chair and stared aghast at her for a moment, then, giving a sigh of relief, he continued in a reassured tone of voice:

"For a second I thought you were in earnest; it was a cruel jest."

"What if I say I do not jest?"

"Ah! stop these cruel questions in mercy. You would not have let me call you Feodora if you—you did not entertain some regard for me."

"In Siberia one forgets conventionality."

"What!" exclaimed Boris in a dazed voice, rising to his feet. "Do you——"

"Hush!" interrupted Feodora. "Hearken to my tale, and then you will know *one* of my reasons for refusing you. Four years ago I was in St. Petersburg

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there, at a ball, I met a young Russian noble; we fell in love with each other, and in two months we were engaged. By some unlucky occurrence my father quarrelled with him, broke off the engagement, and brought me with him here, despite my pleadings and those of my aunt (with whom I was staying), in order that I should not see him again. How can I marry you, as I am engaged? Go to St. Petersburg, forget me, and wed some other who would be better able to appreciate you than I should."

"If he were dead would you marry me?" asked Boris, laying his hand on the hilt of his sword. "Say yes, and give me his name and address; I will insult him—he will be forced to challenge me then——"

A bugle call rang out at this moment, followed by hoarse orders and the neighing of horses.

"The convicts!" cried Feodora, as she walked swiftly towards the window followed by Boris, just in time to see them file past.

They were a motley band of men, women, aye, and children, too; manacled, footsore, haggard, and with despair imprinted on their faces. They marched on through the driving snow, urged forwards ever and anon by the lash. It was a sight to cause the hardest heart to quail.

"Well, Feodora, what is your answer?" cried Boris, as he looked out of the window.

She did not reply, for her gaze had rested on the tall soldier-like figure of one of the convicts, who started when he saw her, and stood still in surprise until a soldier riding up raised his whip, the next instant it descended, curling round the prisoner like a writhing snake.

Feodora cried out in sympathy, while the convict once more moved haltingly onwards.

"Come away," said Boris, "your heart is too tender to behold such sights as these, although the curs deserve their treatment."

"Deserve!" cried Feodora, turning her flashing eyes on him. "By what right do you set yourself up as a judge of your fellow men?"

"They have been condemned by Russian law," hazarded Boris.

"Condemned by Russian law," she echoed with a bitter laugh. "But there—go! I feel faint—go!"

"Your answer, Feodora! Do not say——"

"You will have it in a week," she replied; then she continued: "But go—leave me—alone."

There was such an accent of pleading in her voice that Boris left her presence without uttering a word. As soon as she was alone she buried her face in her hands and cried in a voice broken by sobs: "Alexis! oh Alexis, to think that you should have come to this." Then, clenching her fists, she exclaimed, rising from her chair:

"But you shall not work in the mines, for I will save you! Ah, but how?" she cried in agony. "I am only a woman, alas! but what strength cannot accomplish cunning must."

With a groan of despair she returned once more to the window. Towards her from the road to the mine advanced four men under the guard of Boris. Strangely enough, the tall, soldier-like figure was amongst them. Once again he halted, when Xerinka, drawing his sword, struck him with the flat side of it so furiously as to stretch him almost senseless to the ground. It was then for the first time that the young lieutenant became aware that he was in front of Feodora's house, and that she had witnessed his action. He bit his lip with vexation.

A moment later Feodora, regardless of the biting cold, was in the street. Darting a furious glance at Xerinka, she knelt down in the snow beside the prostrate convict, then turning her flashing eyes on Boris, she bade him leave her presence. Scarcely knowing what he did, he obeyed, and marched a good six yards away with his three prisoners. It was not far, yet the swiftly falling snow blotted them out from her gaze; then, taking the man's head on her knee, she whispered in his ear:

"Alexis!"

The convict opened his eyes, and exclaimed in a low voice:

"Feodora, dearest, you recognised me!"

"Could I not penetrate *any disguise!* I have come to save you!"

"Save me?" he echoed dully. "Who can be saved from the mines?"

"Hush!" whispered she. "Do you know where you are to be lodged of a night?"

"Yes. The usual prison being full, we are to be placed in a little hut just outside this hamlet for a short time, until a band of the prisoners here are sent back to Tobolsk *en route* for elsewhere."

Feodora uttered a low glad cry on hearing this intelligence, and replied in a low, excited whisper:

"Be ready to fly on the fifth night from now—to fly with me!"

"But how——"

"Hush! Don't question me, dearest, but trust all to me; only be ready on the fifth night; and now pretend to be recovering from a faint, for here they come."

She spoke the truth, for Boris, realising that he had no right to leave a convict unguarded, was returning. Feodora rose, and with well simulated wrath, cried:

"So you have come to fetch your prisoner. It is no thanks to you that he has recovered consciousness." Then, taking him on one side, she exclaimed, as Alexis staggered to his feet: "Should it come to my ears that you have struck another convict as brutally as you did that man, I will never give you my answer!"

A happy smile irradiated his face, and, calling to some soldiers who had just come up, he bade them conduct the convicts to their prison. As soon as they had gone Boris cried passionately:

"Feodora, I implore you to give me your answer now."

"In five days you shall have it."

"But why this delay—why keep me in this cruel suspense?"

"As a punishment for your barbarity," she replied coldly; then she added: "and also to test your courage, for it is whispered here that you are but a coward at heart."

"Set me any task, however perilous it may be, and you will see if I cannot give the lie direct to the circulators of such a rumour."

"You know the tale of that convict who was kicked to death, whose spirit, it is said, haunts the house in which he died? Well, my father told me that the prisoners are going to be kept there."

"Only those four," interrupted Boris.

"If you keep guard alone there on the *fifth night from now*, I will give you my answer. This is the task I set you."

Like most Russians, Xerinka was superstitious. He would not have feared to meet a mortal foe or brave a danger, but to meet perhaps the spirit of the convict whose death some laid at his door made him draw back—he hesitated to accept the challenge.

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"So this is the way you give the lie direct to those who, it appears, speak the truth," she said sneeringly, and moving away. "Coward!"

"Stay!" cried Boris, laying a detaining hand on her arm, "do not accuse me of cowardice before you have heard my answer."

"And it is?"

"That I shall be there!"

* * * * *

It is midnight, and the convict station of O—— is wrapped in repose. No sound disturbs the stillness, for the snow deadens even the footsteps of the sentries outside the common prison, and those of Lieutenant Xerinka, who, armed with bayonet and rifle, keeps his strange vigil outside the hut wherein the four convicts are imprisoned.

For the hundredth time Boris strives to pierce the gloom to see if she whom he awaits comes; in vain, Feodora is late in keeping her tryst.

A sudden fear chills his heart as the idea flashes across his brain that she may not come, but a rustle of garments quiets his fears. In an instant he was on guard and had challenged.

"It is I—Feodora."

"You, dearest! I almost feared you would not come," he exclaimed, flinging down his rifle.

"Not come, Boris?" there was a wondering tone in her voice. "Did I not say I should; how did you get permission for keeping guard?"

"They thought I was mad," he answered, as she approached him, "but they granted my request though. Colonel Stanuff had a good laugh at my expense, and now having *granted* your strange demand, darling—what—what is your answer?" The question was asked haltingly.

"I have been thinking and reasoning for five days, as you know, Boris, and have at last arrived at my decision."

"And that is——?"

"Yes."

"Ah, Feodora, what an angel you are!" he cried impetuously, "and what relief you have brought to my mind." Then suddenly checking himself, he added: "But how can I tell you are not amusing yourself at my expense, as you have so often done?"

A moment's pause, during which her hand sought the hilt of a dagger at her girdle; then throwing back her furs, she said softly:

"Let my first kiss be the seal of the truth of my answer!"

She flung herself into his outstretched arms, and raised her face to his. The instant their lips met a foot of steel at the same moment was driven to its hilt into his heart, and Boris fell without a groan at his deceiver's feet.

With nervous fingers she took the keys from his girdle, his blood staining her white fur gloves as she did so, and with trembling hands she unfastened the door of the hut.

A few seconds later the manacles fell from Alexis' wrists, and he was free, his release being followed by that of his companions.

"Oh, Feodora, my darling!" he cried, taking her into his arms, and kissing her passionately. "One may hear of men who have dared all for those they love, and yet how little one hears of the heroism and devotedness of your sex. How can I and my comrades, who are free from every taint of guilt, thank you who have so haply saved us—poor victims of the bureaucracy?"

"By following me, dearest," she said in a low, hurried voice. "All is prepared, a sledge awaits us outside the village; my old servant Moutcha drives, so don't be afraid when you see him."

Once more he kissed her flushed cheek, and then his three companions in turn took her gloved hand and held it reverently in dumb gratitude and respect.

Outside the hut they halted, and, perceiving the body of the dead lover of Feodora, Alexis exclaimed:

"Of a truth, my love, you have a clever little head, but you have forgotten one thing."

"And that is?"

"To divest him of his weapons," he continued, doing so himself as he spoke.

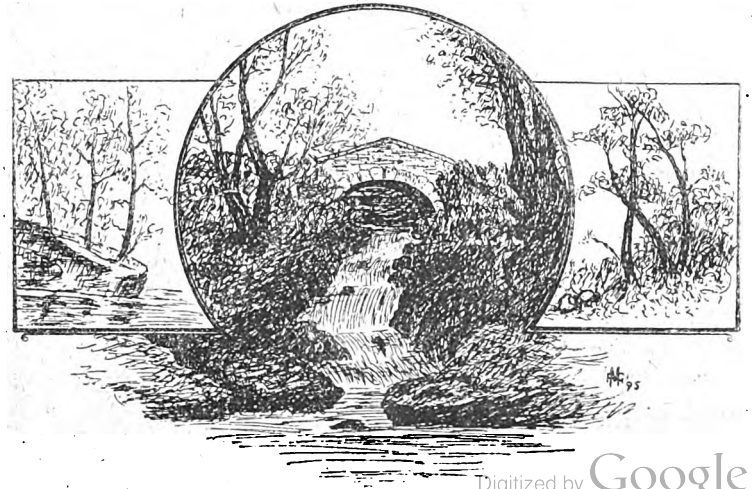
Five minutes later they were speeding noiselessly westwards.

* * * * *

But little remains to be told. After countless dangers the party reached England three months later. Two of them were subsequently pardoned and returned to Russia; a third lives in Paris; while Count Alexis Pattowa and his lovely wife live within two miles of Hyde Park, and often when alone in their drawing-room the Count imprints a kiss on his wife's fair brow, whispering as he does so the sinister word:

"*Siberia!*"

Tristam Monke.



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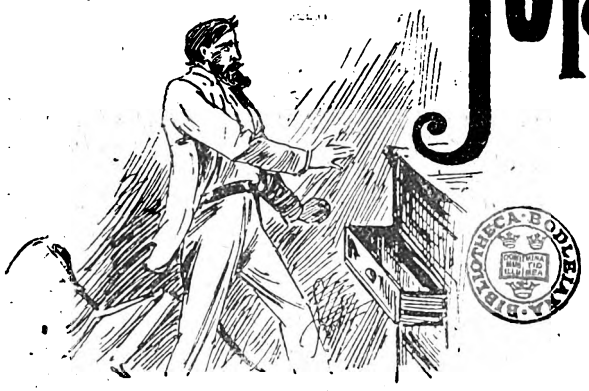
The Gods of Jules Hirschler



Jules Hirschler made his money diamond mining in South Africa. His connection was with a firm in Hatton Garden, and his knowledge of diamonds in the rough being unequalled, he soon became a wealthy man.

All the Kaffir's thieving propensities were well known to him. He was a sharp master, keen-witted, though quick-tempered, feared, yet respected.

Every precaution against robbery that could possibly be devised, had been taken by Hirschler, and even the one Kaffir servant whom he almost grew to trust, was never allowed to be tempted.

Still his master commissioned him to keep a sharp look out for the other thieves, and on more than one occasion his services had been invaluable.

Of late Jules Hirschler's fortune had been accumulating rapidly, the last stone which came into his possession being one of the most valuable he had ever seen. He gave the large sum of £10,000 for this precious rough jewel, knowing he should get five times that amount for it when cut.

He was seated at his desk examining the stone, his heart swelled with gratification, as he laid it down, and gazed with admiring eyes at what would one day be a thing of rarest beauty and most lustrous light.

It had been carefully under lock and key until this minute, but was now about to be taken by Hirschler to the bank for safe conduit to England.

No previous gem had given him the wild delight, the feverish exultation, with which his present prize inspired him. That cloudy crystal seemed to fire his brain, sap his reason. He was like a heathen gazing on his gaudy god, in mental adoration. So wrapped was he in contemplation, that for a moment he did not hear the stealthy footsteps of Joe, his Kaffir servant, enter the room. As his eyes caught the man's reflection in a mirror on the wall, he clutched the stone involuntarily. The feel of its cool surface in his heated palm was sweet.

Joe's head was turned in the opposite direction, he was looking evidently for his master in the verandah beyond.

"Joe has not seen," thought Hirschler, "it is quite safe."

He hastily slipped the stone in a side drawer of his desk for temporary cover, and called to Joe.

"Want anything?"

The Kaffir advanced.

A man with fine stones had come to see the "Boss," and was seeking entrance of Joe.

The intelligence was welcome to Jules Hirschler, he never lost the opportunity of a deal.

Bargaining, and the making of profits, was his second nature, dear to him as the life blood in his veins.

He ordered Joe to show the man in, and was soon eagerly scrutinising the contents of his pocket-book.

They were undoubtedly good specimens. Jules Hirschler examined the gems with knowing eyes—crossing to the window, the light of which was needed to see and value them. Some slight argument ensued between the two men, while Hirschler drove the bargain, which engrossed his whole soul.

Eventually the deal was carried through to the satisfaction of both parties, for Jules was fair, and offered a good price.

"I've something there in my desk which I *must* show you," he said, his eyes sparkling as he turned from the window, and the man strapped up his empty pocket-book. "You will appreciate it, you are a connoisseur like myself. I had it out just as you arrived, and slipped it in here for the time being."

The stranger watched him stoop down, open the drawer with a sigh of conscious pride, then stagger back with a smothered oath.

"The dickens! it's gone!"

His knees knocked together, he clutched the chair for support.

"Gone! impossible! We have not left the room."

Jules drew himself together, rearing his head like a tower of strength, in which his eyes gleamed dangerously. His white lips and even teeth were clenched, the breath came hotly like fire through his nostrils. He had been robbed of his chief idol, the smaller gods were there, but all of them put together could not pay for the loss of that superlative treasure.

"Joe, my Kaffir servant," he hissed. "The only man that has been in the room, yet how, and when?"

"He must have shown consummate skill in extracting it," replied the merchant, "probably when our backs were turned a moment, at the window; these fellows are sharp, one never knows!"

"I'll get it back if it costs me——"

But Jules did not finish his sentence, or the stranger missed it, as the outraged man rushed in a frenzy from the room, calling loudly for Joe.

The voice resounded like thunder, vibrated with intensity. It was that of a being unhumanised by fury,

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yelling here, there, everywhere, for the servant that answered not.

The diamonds he had bought rattled in the depths of his pockets, as he hastened madly through the grounds, still with the name of Joe on his frozen lips.

At last he reached the Kaffir's hut, and entered breathlessly, to find the man bending over a white child. It was a nameless infant, born of some unknown parentage, which a year ago had been left on Hirschler's doorstep, and commended by him to the care of his servant.

The baby was moaning pitifully, while Joe, endeavouring to check its screams, appeared engrossed in the plastering up of a wound in its leg.

Jules grasped him by the throat.

"Come here, you dog," he cried, dragging him to the door. "Give up the diamond, or you are a dead man. Quick!" drawing a revolver, and pointing it in the Kaffir's eyes. "Where is it?"

Joe fell on his knees, and grovelled at Hirschler's feet, vowing his innocence, beating his brow, and kissing his master's boots.

The child, he said, had been heard screaming, having cut his leg, for which reason he left the house. He knew nothing of the diamond—nothing!

Thus he swore again and again, while Jules still threatened him with his revolver if he would not disclose.

"No one entered the room but you," he said sternly. "If you prevaricate you *die!*"

Still the wailing of the child within re-echoed round the hut.

Gradually Jules Hirschler's temper was mastering him; Joe's denial lashed his rage to madness. The thought of the lost fortune tortured his money-loving nature—one word from this whimpering cur might give it back, but he was obstinate as the stones on which he crouched, disclaiming all knowledge.

A volley of curses broke from his lips, his desperate fingers pulled the trigger, and Joe rolled over on the threshold, dead.

As he watched his servant's blood trickle under his feet, dyeing the soles of his boots a dull red, he drew back with a shudder.

Jules' ungovernable temper had overruled his better instincts, which were not by nature brutal.

The sight of the stiff body on the ground revolted him. Yet still he thought chiefly of the lost diamond.

Calling all his men, Jules personally superintended the searching of the hut, which they ransacked high and low, but with fruitless results. Finally the body of Joe himself, now strongly suspected of being the receptacle, was put to the test, yet still in vain, the stone was not there.

The seeds of remorse, which always followed a violent fit of temper, were springing up in Hirschler's heart.

He saw the staring eyes of the dead looking reproachfully at him, and heard in fancy the cry of innocence break afresh from lips that could speak no more.

Then in the presence of that ghastly mutilated form, the wailing of the child in pain reached Jules Hirschler's ears.

He found it with its leg carefully bound and plastered by the foster father's clever hands, and regret mingled with his pity.

The waif ceased crying as Jules bent over it, and held out two chubby arms, dimpled and sunburnt, to the red handed murderer.

"Poor little chap!" said the man, lifting the infant carefully not to hurt its injured limb.

"I suppose I must take you home with me, now Joe is dead!"

He walked slowly to his house, bearing the white child against his heart, with a strange thrill of sentiment, new to Jules Hirschler.

It was the only way he could atone for the life he had taken that day.

* * * * * *

As time wore on, no sign of the stolen diamond!

The memory of it lingered painfully in Hirschler's mind, some people said he never quite got over its loss.

No such stone again fell in his way, and the precious brilliant, lost to the world, would probably lie till doomsday in its undiscovered hiding-place.

The child grew healthy and beautiful. Jules, a self-made man, with deep-seated admiration for blue blood, marvelled at the aristocratic features and apparent good breeding of the boy, whom he adopted for his son.

The wound in his leg healed rapidly, and to outward appearances seemed well enough, yet in after years Walter often complained of the pain it gave him.

"Yes, I still suffer from the old cut," he would tell Hirschler, when questioned on the subject. "From time to time it's pretty bad, and then I can't feel it for months. It's a good thing I am not lame, but it never affects my walk."

Walter had heard the story of poor Joe's untimely end and the missing diamond frequently, but he loved old Hirschler none the less for his hasty temper, which always remained his bane.

"You know, my boy," he told Walter, "the diamonds are often called my 'gods,' but sometimes I think they must be my devils, when I remember poor Kaffir Joe."

At the age of twelve Jules took his adopted son to England, and sent him to Cheltenham college, himself settling in the old country to enjoy the fortune his gods had brought him.

He was proud of the handsome lad, and had great ideas already concerning his future.

Walter was an immense favourite wherever he went—passed easily into the army from Sandhurst, and rejoiced Jules Hirschler's heart with his polished manners and gentlemanly bearing.

"He's the right sort, he is," Hirschler confided to a colonial chum. "Walter does me credit, and I'm grateful to him for it. I like to see him in his swagger regimentals, hobnobbing with all the swells. I mean him to make a grand match, as my heir he will be gilded enough for a duchess. He's not a bit carried away with it all, but just as frank and open and affectionate to his old dad as when I nursed him on my knee in his infancy. He knows, too, what I most desire, and will remember my wishes as sure as I stand here. 'Marry into the aristocracy, my boy,' I said. 'That is what I expect; now you know how you can please me.'"

"And he will do it, too," replied Jules' friend, "if I know the stuff he's made of."

Walter would have gladly have realised any reasonable expectations of the man who brought him up and launched him on the seas of life. But it happened at this time that he found himself strangely attracted by Mabel Forest, an impecunious country parson's daughter, with the softest grey eyes, and the sweetest voice he had ever heard. Walter had met many society dames and ballroom coquettes, but none of them quickened the pulses of his heart.

Lady Susan with the seraphic smile and brilliant

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teeth, amused him for an hour, he rode with her sisters, and dined her father at his club. He met the old aristocratic family of B——'s from Staffordshire, and sent the prettiest daughter half-a-dozen bouquets. But beyond the casual civilities, the little attentions of life, Walter troubled himself but slightly, and gave scant worship at the shrine of these proud beauties.

Mabel Forest.

Not until Mabel Forest came into his vision did passion, in its true and most forcible sense, possess the young man's being.

She was gentle, lovable, all that seemed best and purest in his eyes; her virtue and freshness, her dowry, her lack of fortune her only vice.

Jules Hirschler, his ideas and ambitions were forgotten. In Walter's opinion a *mariage de convenance* had always been distasteful.

He went in his blind rapture to Mabel Forest, poured out the tale of his love, felt her warm lips meet his own, and knew he was victorious. Yet that Mabel should love one so utterly unworthy amazed, bewildered him! He could hardly believe his good fortune in winning such a prize!

His happiness seemed almost too great to last, and like a cloud on a fair sky, the thought of Jules Hirschler swept over his mind.

"Marry into the aristocracy, my boy. That is what I expect."

The words came back with unpleasant force, the only return that Hirschler asked for all that he had given this nameless waif and stray. It smote upon his conscience, even as he held Mabel to his heart, and felt the delirious ecstasy of love's first passion. He would give up all, if need be, for the sake of a woman. What will men not do, when the madness is upon them.

He basked in the light of her lustrous eyes, he swore fidelity till death, and left her in the seventh Heaven of bliss, with a prayer of thankfulness for the treasure God had given him.

Then Walter returned to his reputed father's house in Piccadilly, where he was greeted with the ever-ready welcome, dined in first-rate style, and generally made much of.

During the evening he broached the subject of his marriage to Jules Hirschler.

"I have met the only girl I can ever love," he declared, gazing adoringly through a cloud of smoke, as if he saw her face.

A thrill of expectation ran through Hirschler's veins.

"At last!" he said with a sigh of approval, never dreaming Walter would disappoint him. "Well my boy, *who* is she?"

He leant forward eagerly, with the look in his eyes that Walter had only seen when Jules was examining a very fine diamond in its rough state. They glistened like crystals, and were expressive of intense excitement.

"Mabel Forest," stammered the young man, growing red under the anxious scrutiny.

"Never heard of her," declared Jules, involuntarily turning to the peerage; "got a handle to her name, eh?"

"No," retorted Walter, with a toss of his handsome head. "Plain Mabel Forest of Brackgreen Vicarage. Her father is a clergyman, they have no money," speaking defiantly, "nor title, but they are good simple people. There is nothing against them."

For the moment Jules Hirschler was speechless, while the evil temper, as fierce and uncontrollable in age as youth, welled up. At last he found his voice; it shook with elaborate disdain.

"A country parson's daughter!" he sneered. "So *this* is your grand match, your duchess!" with a low laugh, "this the wedding that was to connect you with the upper circles, and give us both a footing in Society. It was the one thing I stipulated for when I put you in the Lancers, and made you my heir. A pretty show of gratitude!"

"Oh! father," he cried, but the old man sprang to his feet and checked the words on Walter's tongue.

"No excuses, *no* explanations. If you regret your foolhardy conduct, give her up, I'll pay to get you out of it."

These words roused the young lover's ire.

"*Pay* Mabel!" he thundered, "what do you take her for?"

"A scheming minx who is after your money."

The words seemed blasphemous to Walter. He quivered with indignation.

"Nothing on earth shall come between us," he muttered with set teeth. "If I have to break stones on the road to buy my bread."

And knew he was victorious.

This sounded to Jules like a challenge.

"You need not look to *me* for help," he cried, the purple hue upon his face, indicative of his worst mood. "If you marry this girl you won't get my money, not a farthing of it, sir! Please understand that!"

For a moment Walter looked stunned, standing

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speechless, staring at the angry light in Hirschler's eyes.

Then he bowed his head in assent.

"You pig-headed young idiot!" roared Jules, hoarse with suppressed passion. "Can't you see what an ass you're making of yourself, ruining your career, hurling yourself against a brick wall?"

"Thank you," replied Walter, drawing himself up, with a curl of lip. "I have chosen Mabel Forest, and I mean to stick to her."

He walked to the door proud and erect.

Jules Hirschler shook his fist threateningly at the retreating figure.

"It's ridiculous! it's infernal impudence!" he cried. "Get out of my house till you come to your senses."

Walter paused, scanning his foster father from head to foot disdainfully.

"Yes," he said, "I'll get out of your house, but I'll go to Mabel Forest!"

Then he turned and slammed the door, while Jules Hirschler staggered back into his chair with something like a groan.

* * * * *

A strange loneliness crept over the house in Piccadilly the night that Walter left.

Jules Hirschler, stubborn and relentless, heard his footsteps in the hall, the footman's whistle for a hansom, and then the closing of a heavy door.

He started to his feet, and creeping, as if ashamed, to the window, peered round the corner of the blind.

The numerous vehicles confused him, he could not tell in which the boy he had loved as a son was driving away.

All he knew was that he had gone, hounded from his home by a storm of hasty words, for the love of a simple woman. The thought sickened Jules Hirschler, he felt as he had done on the day when he shot Joe, and carried the child home in a fit of remorse and self-reproach. These evil tempers always left him feeling faint and ill. He rang for brandy and soda, and flung aside a half-smoked cigar that had turned like hay to his taste.

He sank on to the sofa wearied by the tempest, limp as a man who has wrestled against a mighty wind.

"Thank you," replied Walter.

The reaction from fiercest choler to calm was always rapid in Jules Hirschler's case, and left him the more unnerved. But his pride was such that, after the attack, he would not own to his irascibility. Nothing could induce him to hold out the olive branch unasked, though even before daylight broke over the great city he yearned to undo the night's work.

Walter spent the sleepless hours pondering over his future.

To find himself suddenly cast adrift was desperately hard just when he most needed money with which to make Mabel happy.

Yet he was young and strong, full of throbbing life and burning activity. The up-hill road might surely be climbed with perseverance and persistency, by one ready and willing to work and prove himself worthy of a good woman's love.

Of course, he must leave his regiment, renounce the luxuries of wealth, and fight the battle unaided against poverty.

So sure did he feel of success, that the sting of loss, and his sorrow for Jules Hirschler's injustice faded to insignificance.

His eyes were heavy, however, from a restless night; he looked pale and haggard when the warm morning sunlight crept through his window in his club bedroom.

"It will never do to look like this," he thought, glancing at his drawn features in the glass. "If you are down in your luck, it is no good publishing it to the whole world."

So he sent round to the stables to order the new charger he had just bought from Captain Lingard of the 16th.

"It's a perfect living demon," he had told him frankly, at which Walter smiled, and handed him his 200 guineas without question. You must pay for blood, and Lingard's horse had been the talk of the regiment.

"A gallop in the Row will be just the thing to freshen me up," said Walter to himself, not forgetting the unpleasant work that lay before him.

He looked admiringly at his latest purchase as it stood outside the club door stamping its feet and tossing its head. The black coat shone like satin, and Walter wondered, as he sprang into the saddle, whether this would be the last time he should ride it before Lingard's "Demon" passed from its new owner's hands into others.

Sad at heart he entered the gates at Hyde Park Corner, with the long stretch of tan before him already peopled by riders and their steeds. Many eyes were turned enviously in the direction of "Demon," who, true to his name, gave Walter more trouble than he would have cared to own.

Beads of perspiration stood out on his brow, for "Demon" was full of corn and high spirits, and nearly wrenched his rider's arms from their sockets, when he reined him in from a gallop. As he sped up the incline, great lumps of earth flew high into the air from the animal's hoofs; more than once he bolted, and his devilry seemed inexhaustible.

Perhaps Walter was weakened from mental care, for the horse played with him like a child, finally succeeding in unseating his rider, and kicking him in the leg, just above the old wound, which had been paining him that morning.

He was carried to St. George's Hospital, where the doctors appeared somewhat puzzled by the sudden inflammation which had set in.

"What sort of an injury was the old one?" they asked him.

Walter could afford them no sort of information.

"I'm afraid we shall give you some pain," said one. "The wound must be probed and opened to discover the cause of irritation."

Walter agreed.

"Be as quick as you can," he said, clenching his teeth.

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He was conscious of a sickening agony, and burying his head in a pillow, tore the cover with his teeth.

Gradually he began to feel easier, and finding they were binding up the wound with wondering faces, asked them the cause of their evident amazement.

"It is most extraordinary," said a voice at his elbow. "A large stone was extracted—looks like some uncut jewel."

Walter held out his trembling fingers to grasp the prize.

They gave it to him, stained with his own blood.

"*The lost diamond!*" he cried. "Joe's hidden spoil."

* * * *

Jules Hirschler was sitting alone in his study.

Oh! if only Walter would return, and by some word, some sign, give him a loophole to relent.

He was too reserved to make the first advance, yet he pined for the lad he had grown to love, with all a father's yearning.

As if in answer to his thoughts a message came that Walter had returned, and asked to see him.

The old man's heart leapt with joy.

"Bring him here," he replied, scarcely able to conceal his relief before the servant.

Walter had come back penitent, he should have his blessing!

"God bless you, my boy."

The door opened, and his all but son limped in.

Mr. Hirschler did not speak, but gazed with ineffable tenderness upon Walter.

What would he say?

The supplication for forgiveness that Jules had expected came not. Only a deferential bow, and the ordinary tones of a courteous visitor.

"I have come on a matter of business," he said.

"Oh!" replied Hirschler, as if a sudden douche of cold water had been flung over him. "Won't you sit down?"

"Thanks. It is rather painful standing, I have had an accident to my leg."

Jules looked concerned, but checked the anxious words that rose involuntarily to his lips.

"What have you to say?"

"You remember the diamond that Joe stole and concealed?"

The question came like an electric shock to Hirschler.

"The diamond—yes—could I ever forget?"

"It is found," replied Walter slowly.

The old man leapt to his feet with a half-smothered scream.

"*Found!*"

He trembled so violently that for the moment Walter feared he would fall down in a fit.

"Yes, I am glad to say that I have the privilege of returning it to you, as a slight token of the gratitude I feel for all your past goodness to me."

The young man's voice shook slightly. As he spoke he held out his arm, spread open his fingers, and revealed the chief among Hirschler's gods, lying in his palm.

The old man grasped it with a yell of triumph, and falling on his knees, beside himself with joy, grasped Walter's hands, showering kisses upon them.

"God bless you, my boy," he exclaimed excitedly, "how did you find it, when and where?"

He briefly explained, the colour rushing back to his face, while the old familiarity revived between them.

"And all these years you have carried that treasure about in your flesh," said Jules Hirschler. "My poor boy! what a burden it has been for you. No, no, my lad, not *my* diamond," as he pushed his god towards Walter. "That shall be my wedding present to you and Mabel Forest."

W. G.

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Melody! Melody!! Melody!!!

SIXPENCE MONTHLY.

- - THE NEW MUSICAL MAGAZINE. - -

THE FIRST NUMBER WILL BE PUBLISHED ON

February 29th for March 1st,

AND AMONGST ITS CONTENTS WILL APPEAR:

A NEW SONG.
By Ch. Gounod (posthumous work).

BERCEUSE DE JOCELYN.
For Violin and Piano. By Benjamin Godard.

NEW PATRIOTIC SONG.
By J. M. Coward. Words by Clement Scott.

MEDITATION FOR ORGAN OR HARMONIUM.
By Professor Bridge.

NEW WALTZ, "SPIRIT OF THE STARS."
By May Ostlere.

AND COMPOSITIONS FROM TITO MATTEI, G. H. CLUTSAM, A. GORING THOMAS, A. G. CROWE, (COMPOSER OF SEE-SAW WALTZ,) A. J. CALDICOTT, LAWRENCE KELLIE, GABRIEL FAURE, ETC., ETC.

A literary interest is given to the Magazine by contributions on "Musical Happenings," by Mr. R. S. Hichens, and by some valuable criticisms of current and recent musical works by Mr. Joseph Bennett.

From the above list of contributors it will be seen that the very best talent only is represented, and the aim of the promoters of MELODY will be to provide for Sixpence a selection of vocal and instrumental music such as could never before have been purchased even for One Hundred Sixpences.

MELODY will consist of 56 pages, sheet music size, and will be inclosed in a stout cover, bearing on its front page a design of most striking beauty.

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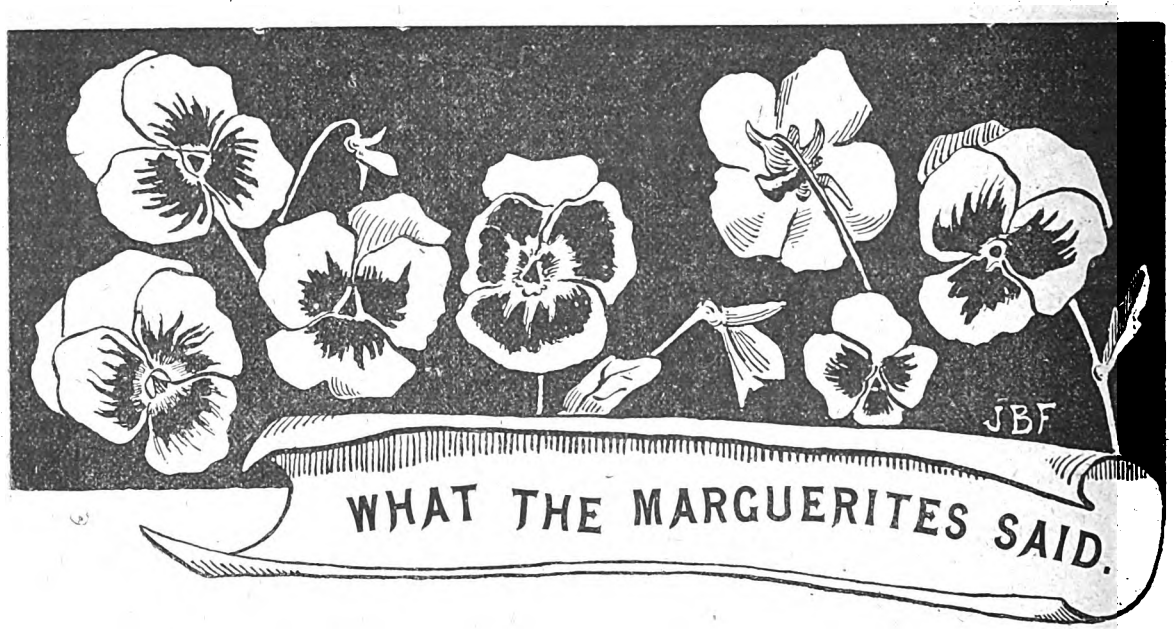

Charavelle is a pretty village which I particularly admire, and so would you if you knew its little church, a chiselled jewel, its old château with its walls cracked and mossy, but above all the location of the village, which clings to the side of the mountain like a nest fallen from I know not where.

In this corner of the world, not mentioned in the geographies, lived some years ago an old woodcutter and a rich farmer. Everybody in the country knew old Pierre and his miserable hut in the edge of the wood, and when they met him with a load of faggots on his back, or with his axe raised against the trunk of a tree, they all gave him a friendly "good-day." He was a good man who had never harmed even a fly, so everyone said, and having passed the better part of his life in the solitude of the forests, preserved, in spite of his great age, a pure and honest heart.

Everyone also knew the rich farmer, Michael Merieux, but no one liked him. He was avaricious and sullen, and, moreover, superstitious, like those who are not sure of their reckoning. He loved money passionately, and every means of increasing his wealth appeared to him to be legitimate and proper. It is useless to say that he did not spend it freely. No one ever saw him at the wine shop. He never gave a sou to the beggar who held out his hand on Sunday as they came out from mass, and his door was never opened, or his heart either, to the wayfarer in quest of a bit of bread or a cup of wine.

And yet he was the richest farmer near Charavelle, having vines, fields of wheat and meadows yielding rich forage, which he always sold at the highest price. He was old, without children or family that anyone knew of, and it was a mystery to everybody what he would do with the fortune which he increased day by day.

A strange idea one morning entered the head of the old woodcutter to go and borrow some money from the rich farmer. It was true that long ago Merieux had said to Pierre, after a service he had rendered him: "When you have need of me do not hesitate. One good turn deserves another." Well, now he had need of his help, and notwithstanding the sordid avarice of the old farmer, the woodcutter, with the artless trust that characterised him, went to Merieux and said:

"You can relieve me of a great trouble. My boy writes me that he is ill and in need of a little money. I haven't it now, but in October, when I have finished cutting down the side of the wood which they have marked for the new road I shall be able to pay you, if you will lend it to me to-day."

"I have no money to lend," said the farmer. "Times are as hard for me as well as for anybody else."

The woodcutter shrugged his shoulders.

"Say, rather, that you will not lend it," said he, "for you have plenty. You could save me a great deal of trouble."

"I repeat to you—I cannot!" said Merieux gruffly.

"Then I must remind you of what you said to me one day: 'One good turn deserves another; when you have need of me do not hesitate.'"

"Bah, that is too long ago," said the farmer. "What are you talking about?"

"Yes," said the woodcutter, "it was a long time ago, but, all the same, I risked my life to save yours, when I carried you out of Jacques' house which was burning while you slept. I do not say this to reproach you. I have never spoken of it to anyone. I would not speak of it now if it were not to remind you of your promise, for you see my son's sick, and he relies upon me to help him. It will be a great service to me." And he added in a low tone, as if ashamed to be persistent: "You will save his life perhaps, and I risked mine to save yours."

"Life, life," growled old Merieux. "When I lend, it is my money. I do not risk it or my life."

And old Pierre went away without the money that he came to borrow. Another, however, had pity on the old man, who, for the first time in his life felt bitterly towards a human being.

He sought a means of avenging himself on Merieux without doing him serious harm. At last, after mature reflection, one night as the moon shone as bright as daylight, he went out towards the wheatfields of the rich farmer. It was in March; the grass was just

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beginning to sprout, and at the top of the trees were a few shivering buds to show that Nature was ready to come forth radiant and charming at the first call of spring.

The woodcutter went to the middle of the field, and there, in the midst of the wheat which would soon be up, he traced with a stick some light furrows of strange and irregular forms, then throwing something into the furrows he covered them with earth and quietly returned to his hut. The following night he did the same thing in another field of wheat, and for several nights following that until he had been in all of Merieux's fields.

And in the morning, being very sure that he had not been seen by anything but the stars, nor heard by anything but the crickets, he would go to his work in the woods where the little nestlings were just beginning to chatter.

* * * *

Time passed, and the warm season made the wheat and the flowers grow. One morning a great caravan of people came from Charavelle and the surrounding villages to see a strange phenomenon in the fields of Farmer Merieux, who had been ill for some time and knew nothing about it.

What was his surprise, his terror, to see when he went out for the first time, the word "Miser" traced in gigantic letters of flowers in the midst of his wheat. Yes, marguerites, whose beautiful blossoms speak so sweetly to lovers, rose up on their stems in thick clusters accusing the old skinflint. "Miser," again the blue cornflowers in other field; "Miser," repeated the crimson poppies in another, and the people he met called to him "Miser! Miser!"

All night long he seemed to see before his eyes and to hear buzzing in his ears that terrible word. What did it mean? How did this accusation, at first whispered by those who knew him, spring forth so openly in his fields? Was it because he had always refused to give a straw to the poor of the country?

The old woodcutter.

As he was very superstitious and not very strong in his head it came near driving him crazy.

"You cannot defend yourself now," said the old woodcutter, who came to see him one day, "for even the flowers, whose souls are so tender and pitiful, have accused you in the sight of heaven! Truly, you must be a great culprit!"

"I—I—am not—a miser."

"You are the only one who thinks so. After all that has been shown you, if some misfortune happens to you after this warning——"

"Some misfortune?" said Merieux. "Do you think——"

"Listen," said the woodcutter. "There has been, you know it well, a kind of evil spirit in the country; no one has seen it, but it exists all the same. Now, to conjure it away, I know what I would do."

"What would you do?"

"This—and not take four roads about it—this year I would give all the money from the wheat to the poor-box of the country."

"Never, never! You must find some other way."

"There is no other way," said Pierre; "the letters sprang up at the same time as the wheat—that was meant to direct you."

"How do you know?" asked the farmer.

"That comes of itself. Reflect! Why did the flowers write that name in your fields?"

In a word, so well did the woodcutter work on his fears that the first time in his life old Merieux made a large donation to the poor.

Everybody commented upon this strange occurrence, but only the woodcutter knew how it came about—that he, in the clear nights of March had sown in the fields of the old farmer some seeds of marguerites, cornflowers, and poppies, without being seen by anyone but the stars overhead, and heard by none but the crickets.

Ethel Dicey.

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The Knotted Rope.

IT is night—black, tempestuous, oppressive, abnormal. The thick, gloomy clouds have gathered all day long over the fair valley, green and smiling, and their dark shadow has so steeped in darkness the landscape that its vivid sub-tropical hues have seemed painted over with a wash of deeper colour, dashed wide and thick by vandal hands. Later on, they have massed together heavily and of their own weight have sunken low, with a downfall of rain in torrents.

With this the wind has risen—that cold tremendous wind that blows straight down from the volcanoes; a wind so sharp, so keen, so entirely beyond the resistance of man's endurance, that the clear-eyed Aztecs, quick, like their descendants, to catch the salient characteristics of any matter, were wont in their picture writing to represent its deadly force by the significant symbol of a human skeleton, pierced through the chest by an arrow.

All day long the light rustling blades of the cane fields lay inert and silent under the weight of the oppressive atmosphere; but now, caught in the impalpable finger of this *ven tarron*, they are shaken and twisted, rattling until their sound is like the clashing sabres of a mighty army in battle. Other noises, too, come through the darkness, untraversed by a gleam of tropic lightning, that makes itself felt as tangibly as a pall.

That dense, thick blackness presses against the little panes of the windows with so ominously aggressive an effect that we close the little wickets, trembling with a very genuine terror. Every now and again some high, shrill sound, like the shriek of a dying man, penetrates to where we sit cowering together. Is it the cry of birds, driven by the storm from their nests in the nooks of this old hacienda monastery? Is it the frightened howl of the bloodhounds, confined in a vacant room off the corridor near us? Or must we seek farther than material earthly sources for the origin of those blood-curdling cadences?

Of a sudden we start to our feet with cries of terror as a loud knocking sounds hard and fast on the panels of the double door between us and the corridor. It comes again with the sound of human voices; this visitation is nothing unearthly. Still reluctantly enough we open, and the light shines out on the wrinkled brown face of old Romualdo, the patriarch of the hacienda, leaning on the arm of the major-domo. José Cortina looks careworn and haggard—troubled, even frightened.

"Señor Alvarez is dying," he says, with lips that are purple; "will it please you to participate in the last scene?"

"*Pues, si, senores*," old Romualdo croaks, as the other ceases, "we have brought candles for you, and the holy man is waiting."

We look at each other perplexed! the proposition seems uncanny. But our companion, who knows the country, interposes.

"It is customary," he says, "in event of a death, to invite all beneath the roof to assist at the *sacramentos*. We must go. To refuse would be to manifest ill-will towards the dying and indifference to the repose of his soul."

A gust of wind swoops in at the door, and blows out the candle. We grope our way to the corridor, and battle along it to the chamber of the dying man. At last we arrive, breathless, at the little ante-room, a servant hands us lighted candles, and we steal into the bed-chamber where the centenarian is dying.

He has been a powerful man, this Don Cipriano Alvarez, and even now he looks no feebler, no older, than many a man of half his years. Around his bed are gathered the entire household, less those who now come in with us, and they and we take our places, kneeling, bearing the lighted candles.

"Do ye believe"—the priest looks round upon us as if convinced of our heresy—"in the Blessed Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?"

And "We do believe," we answer. And so on through *Credo*, and to the administration of the Communion.

Then the priest bends above the sick man with the holy wafer. Don Cipriano Alvarez suddenly sits up in his bed, and pushes away the hand of the minister.

"Away with your bread and your wine!" he orders, and his voice is deep and resonant; "you have shrived me as one in the grasp of death and beyond confession, and therein have I fooled you. I held my peace, for that I did not wish to answer. I heed not your prate of repentance nor of absolution. Why should I? The same motives that prompted me then are strong within me, and will burn in my heart past the doors of the Inferno or of Heaven. See here! When new times and new surroundings freed me from the execution of that old-time decree, ye thought I had lost all feeling in the lethargy of old age. Now what is this, I pray thee?" He throws open the breast of his bedgown, and we can see, trailing across his dark, hairy bosom, that is still full and massive, a rope that is knotted about his neck, inside the collar.

A cry bursts forth from all of the retainers. "The halter! Ah! He is still wearing the halter!" And old Romualdo, with the tears in his dulled eyes, mutters: "It was for this, then, that he would no longer have my service."

"Hark ye!" cried Don Cipriano, "listen! Do ye hear the voice of Andronica, and the hoof-beats of the steed on Cubilete? Open the window, that I may hear it clearer! Open, I bid ye! Open!"

He is leaning forward towards the window, his swarthy face alight, impassioned. But the servants huddle together, frightened either at his gruesome manner or at his impiety, and no one moves to obey him. Then he makes as if he would throw himself from the bed and hasten to the window, but old Romualdo catches and holds him feebly, and cries to us: "I beg ye, masters, open, lest he go mad before us!" The window is thrown open. At the same moment, the tempest seems to lull from its vehemence, and borne on we know not what stratum of silence comes from afar, as if echoing down the steep sides of Cubilete, the thunder of a horse dashing along the rocky road, and mingling therewith, ringing shrieks of a woman.

The centenarian raises himself again and looks about him with an air of triumph, as if the sound were sweet as music to him.

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"Ye hear? After all the years 'tis still the same. I do not free her. I am master." As he speaks the words he lifts his hands to the rope about his neck as if it burnt him, gasps, shudders, and falls back on his pillow lifeless, as the priest makes the sign of the cross above him.

We watch by the corpse the rest of the night, for the people of the hacienda are so much shocked and terrified by the closing scene in this dark life that they will not even hold the usual *duelo*. And from the priest and old Romualdo, crouched on the floor beside the bed of his master, we hear the dead man's story.

* * * * *

Cipriano Sota Alvarez was a Spaniard, a Castilian, reared and educated in England, for the better acquisition of thorough business habits, that he might manage and dispatch the affairs of the sugar plantations of Amatla. In those days—it was a decade before the achievement of Mexico's independence of the Spanish yoke, or rather it was the year before the patriot priest, Hidalgo, incited his countrymen to attempt that independence—in those days Amatla was a monastery of Carmelites, and the revenues of the hacienda were enormous. Friar Blas Alvarez, uncle of Cipriano, was at the head of this brotherhood, and he, growing aged, was more than relieved to turn over the questions of sales and accounts to the young man.

Young Alvarez was a man of passions as deep and intense as they were fiery, and the extent of his power at the monastery hacienda did not tend to teach him self-denial. Of all exterior matters he was virtually master. True, he dwelt within the monastery walls, and its discipline was rigorous. But his days were spent abroad, riding from one section to another of the broad domain, and if his comings and goings were irregular, he was allowed licence on the score of zeal in the worldly benefits of the community.

It was in one of his wild rides about the country, on the business of the plantation, that he first saw Andronica Valles. Far up the mountain Cubilete, which was an outpost of the greater of the volcanoes, as it were, a stepping-stone to its vastness—far up, so far that it lay already among the pine trees, there nestled in a clayey hollow a little hamlet, called, from the character of the soil there, El Barral, the place of clay, the clay-bank.

Here dwelt a handful of simple people who moulded and baked the great earthen *hormas* or shapes in which the arroba-weight cones of sugar were charged at the plantations. It was not a profitable calling, for the vessels sold for the merest pittance; but it was a steady one, for the demand was always active. So the simple villagers turned and baked the earthen vessels, and carried them down the steep mountain road into the smiling valley, to Amatla and the other plantations.

Andronica Valles dwelt at El Barral; she was the daughter of a *horméro*, and the day that Cipriano Alvarez saw her first she was descending the steep and rocky roadway, with half a score of the moulds loaded upon her shoulders. She stepped painfully aside to let the horseman pass by her, nor raised her glance to see him. But Cipriano Alvarez was struck by some suggestion of youthful litheness in the slight figure bent under its burden, all shrouded as it was in the disguising coarse blue woollen skirt and *huipil*, and he reined in beside her with some imperative challenge as to her name, her abiding place, and the destination of her *hormas*.

"I am called Andronica Valles, most humble of your servants," she said, after the accepted formula, and as to the lord of the manor. "I am daughter to Toribio Valles. We dwell at El Barral up yonder, and I am carrying the *hormas* to Santa Lucia."

Dark with the rich, soft brownness of her people, with the warm blood mantling in waves under her skin of velvet, her beauty was luscious and tempting as the sunlit downiness of a peach in a southern orchard. Here was no haughty type of an oppressed or captive Indian princess, but the soft, timid, gentle air of womanhood that has been a temptation and a stimulant to hot-blooded man since ever the world was.

"Thou wilt not take the *hormas* to Santa Lucia," said Cipriano Alvarez; "but rather to Amatla—these and all thou shalt have in the future. And thou wilt tell my steward to give thee another *peseta* on the dozen, by my orders."

He put spurs to his black horse, Satanas, and rode away down the mountain side, as if he were already ashamed or repented of the interest he had shown in a peon girl. Andronica laboured onward. Heavy as were the burdens laid upon her, they had not yet deadened the supple grace of her young limbs, any more than labour and privation had affected the seducing sweetness of her countenance, that might later become the leathery, unhuman mask that comes with even middle age to most women of her race and order.

When she went up the steep, cobble-stone incline, and in through the great vaulted gateway to the *despachoin*, a dim, dusk, high-arched corridor, it was with steps that flagged and wavered, not so much from fatigue as from misgiving. She had come seldom to Amatla with her *hormas*. There had been some altercation between her father and the steward—a question of a few coppers that the poor Indian claimed had not been paid for his wares, while the other raged at the imputation, and had thrown Toribio Valles thence with violence. The Indian, all meek and humble as he was, had gone no more to Amatla, and Andronica also had passed by to the farther hacienda of Santa Lucia, save on the rare occasion when there was no consumption yonder, or when her overtasked physical forces failed her.

But to-day the steward looked upon her with smiles of honey, praised the excellence of the wares she brought him, and gave her the additional *peseta* of which Cipriano Alvarez had spoken. But Andronica was ill at ease. She could but perceive that all this attention and solicitude was something abnormal, and she was acutely conscious of the presence of the young man, swarthy and dark bearded, sitting behind the tall desk by the window, who heard intently, she was sure, all that passed between her and the steward.

She turned the coins irresolutely in her hand when she received her money. "I do not know," she stammered, "this other money—it is too much—my father will be angry."

Cipriano looked up, and the steward scanned her curiously. Spaniards both, accustomed to the easy acceptation of pauperism in the whole world, they could not understand how one of her humble position could hesitate to receive a gift of money, from whatever source it should come. At a look from his master, the steward spoke to her with words of reassurance, insinuating, of kindly import. But Andronica shook her head, and laid the money upon the desk before her.

"My father would be angry—and—and I fear that Marcos would reprove me."

A flash of distrust and jealousy leapt into the

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deepest black eyes of Cipriano Alvarez. He glanced at the steward.

"And who may be this Marcos?" said that worthy, with condescension.

"Marcos—he is my *novio*," said the girl, a deep blush burning over her face; and drawing her *huipil* about her, she leapt down the incline, and sped out upon the road like some wild creature, scarce pausing even for reverence before a little squad of the monks that was entering.

The steward looked at Alvarez with a grin of malice. "For *peona*, she is ungrateful. Better give it up, *mi amo*."

Cipriano muttered something into his black beard: "I will give it up—never. So long as she lives—nay, so long as I live, for I am likely to survive her—will I keep before me the thought of vengeance on the jade who has mocked me with her Marcos!"

From that day on, Alvarez seemed to have but one object in life—the pursuit of Andronica Valles.

Thus it befel that he rode up to El Barral, one sunny morning, meaning to settle the matter at once and for ever to his satisfaction.

Cipriano Alvarez flung his horse's bridle to the *mozo* riding behind him, and entered the poor *jacál* of Toribio Valles.

"I have come here for your daughter," he said, without any preface.

The *hormero* left the lathe upon which he had been working, and stood up before the other. Notwithstanding his Spanish name, he was, if not of pure Indian blood, of a strain almost unmixed, and generations of servitude and degradation had not yet defaced the noble type of his ancestry.

"For twice a hundred years," he said, with impressive slowness, "we have been slaves to the Spaniards, and we have, too, many of us, learned to kiss the hands that smite us, to wade in the filth of our masters, to imitate their vices, and to pander to them, to worship their false gods, even. Some few there are among us who keep to the old traditions. We live simply, miserably, toiling like beasts, that we may live, but we live purely. Every day we watch the light kindle yonder on the great white brow of Popocatepetl, the Smoking Mountain, and hope whispers sweetly to us that that day's dawn may herald the coming of Quetzacoatl, the Fair God. And his own coming, this time, not that of false pretenders, worshippers of gold and silver. But, for that our eyes may behold him clearly, for that our feet may follow to the kingdom whither he will lead us, we must have led sober lives, and clean, and honest. Some among us have lost hope and fallen, as I tell you. But some among us still are steadfast and enduring. Such of us do not sell ourselves, nor do we sell our children."

He swung aside the rush mat that served as door between the two poor rooms of his dwelling.

"Andronica, come hither."

The girl came into the room; she was shivering with shame and anger, and Alvarez could but see that, however exaggerated might be the beliefs of the father, the daughter shared them fully. None knew better than he how doggedly the Indians cling to their ancient faith, and how persistently they practise their old rites, shrewdly cloaking the truth, for the most part, with a very fervour of apparent zeal and blind devotion to the faith of the conquerors.

"Will your worship speak to the girl?" said Toribio Valles; "she is free as the humming birds down in the valley, free as the silk of the ceiba when the pods burst open. If she will, she may go with your worship to the life of ease and dishonour that you offer."

Cipriano Alvarez turned silently, sullenly, to Andronica. For the life of him, he could not have spoken to her of the end to which he had destined her, braving, as he must, the indignant flashing light of those great eyes, erstwhile so tender and timid, and the fine scorn that curved her gentle young lips.

She threw back her head, so little while ago under ignominious burdens, like a stag that snuffs a taint on the sweet air of morning.

"There is no longer the hope of tending the fire on the teocallis," she said, "and so the life I would best love is hopeless to me. But Quetzacoatl comes—or soon, or late—and his kingdom will lack people, for our nation is degenerate and unworthy to enter in it. What then can I do better than to rear for him brave sons and honest daughters, that his new realm shall be populous. But shall you be their father? *You!*"—there was unmeasured disdain in her voice, as she looked at Alvarez—"No! never! me likes not the sort of man who covers his mouth with beard, to conceal the weakness of it. Now there is one over the Guerrero way—he is like me—of the *Yndios*."

But her father, more wise than she in reading the hearts and the passions of men, laid his hand upon her lips. "Thou art a foolish babbler. Thou hast dreamed an ideal lover, in the semblance of Quetzacoatl. Señor, you have your answer. Leave us now, I pray you." For the gathering rage in the face of the Spaniard was a thing to see and tremble at.

For all answer, Alvarez raised his hand, that dark and strong right hand that had ere now thrown by the horns a charging bull in the meadows, and—oh! eternal shame to him!—with one blow on the temple struck down the Indian, old and feeble. Stock still, where she stood, Andronica looked at him for an instant, as if with horror and incredulity of his impious cruelty. Then she sprang straight at the throat of Alvarez, rounding her hands before her lips as she came, to utter a strange, wild call that echoed weirdly through the pine trees. In an instant, her fingers were clasping the Spaniard's throat like little hands of steel; her hot wide eyes flamed upon him.

Ashamed though he was to struggle with a woman, as he had not been ashamed to strike down a weak and infirm old man, he yet found himself in self-defence, compelled to strive with the hands that were choking him relentlessly. But the carrier of burdens had the power of her training and her free forest life, and it might not have proved so easy a matter for the Spaniard to free himself had his man not come to the rescue and helped to force Andronica aside. And when she would have returned to the attack she swayed slightly with the impetus of the thrust the man had given her, and her feet touched her prostrate father. All the tigress in her died out in an instant. Her face trembled into anguish and she fell on her knees beside the injured Indian as the two intruders leapt into their saddles. It was time they were away, for the hut was beginning to fill with stealthy-footed shapes that had hastened together there at the call of Andronica.

That night Toribio Valles lay in his *jacál* dying. The blow Alvarez had given him and the general shock to his frail, ill-nourished body had been more than his strength could bear, and his life was a question of days only. His people were about him, for this had been a man of distinction among them. His natural ability, his strength of character and singleness of purpose, together

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with his knowledge of the Spanish tongue, among those who knew only their native dialect, had made him a natural leader.

He waved them all aside, now, with one word, "Andronica." His daughter rose from her knees, and came to stand beside the reed mat he lay upon.

"Thou must leave me, my own, my dearest," he said, in the soft tongue of his people, "this is no place for thee. Thou must go—at once, to-night, over yonder to the mountains of Guerrero, where, near the great caverns of Cacalmanilpa, lives an aunt of thy dead mother. Prepare thyself, my little one, for the journey."

"Nay, father mine," said Andronica, "I cannot leave thee. I will wait until thou goest also."

"It will be many days ere I shall be able to go with thee," said Toribio Valles, disguising his mortal strait from the child of his heart, "and thou must not delay—that were fatal. Nay, no protest. Dost thou forget the laws of our gods of obedience to parents? Then do not vex me with objections."

Andronica ceased to demur, and shortly knelt before her father once again for his blessing ere her departure. More than one of their people made ready to accompany her, but she refused their offers.

"It is better that I go alone," she said, "for thus I may more readily escape the danger that threatens. They will not dream I go alone—for are not women timid? It is here that they will seek. Does a daughter desert the sick bed of her father?" she said almost bitterly.

"Have done, my child, with vain complaints and repinings," said Toribio Valles. "The gods speed thee upon thy journey and see thou pause not until thou reach Cuernavaca, for it is thus the interlopers mouth the name our people gave the city of Quauhahuac, for that it is near the beautiful hills. Go there to the *arbolario*, and the herbalist will send thee on to the caverns. It may be the gods have called thee thither, for that is the land of the young lad Donato."

So, with her father's knowledge of human nature lovingly brought into play to soften the pangs of parting, Andronica set forth on her journey. She must descend at least part way to the valley to skirt along the base of the mountains, and so she took her way down the steep, shelving sides of the Cubilete that she had traversed so often with her burdens. She was but a short space from her house when her quick ear caught the sound of horses' hoofs ascending, and a moment later, from around a sharp bend in the road, there flashed upon her the unexpected light of a lantern held in the hand of a mounted *mózo*, who threw its light on the path before Cipriano Alvarez.

With a bound like the leap of a deer she sprang upon a rock by the roadside; but too late—the men had seen her, and Alvarez, snarling like a wild beast, spurred Satanas forward.

"Where are you going, ingrate? What have you done that you steal away like a thief in the night?"

"I have done no wrong," she answered, "save that of belonging to a race despised and down-trodden—the race you and others regard only as chattels, to be beaten or played with as suits your superb convenience. And I am going—ah! where you dare not follow! I am going to the strongholds of my people, to the mountains of Guerrero, where burrow the great caverns, and where dwells the youth Donato. Ay! but he is noble; *mi Yndito! he* is a man! He is one a woman might die—or *live*—for."

She was wild with the spirit of wrong, she was elate with triumph in the sense of escape and change, and she was sixty feet away from and above Cipriano Alvarez. But from a silver ring among the trappings of his splendid saddle hung a coil whose line was twice that long—a cunningly-braided lasso of black and white horsehair; and while she spoke, Alvarez unbound the leather points that held it, and as she ceased, it hissed through the air and settled down over her head, her neck, and her shoulders, binding her arms to her waist, as bands of steel might have bound them. Then she was jerked roughly from her foothold, and pulled swiftly down to the roadway, and then—oh! sweet Heaven!—the black horse was spurred to madness, and went dashing down the steep sides of Cubilete, while a woman's shrieks rose on the night, loud and shrill at first, but all too soon becoming fainter and dying.

Meanwhile, farther up the mountain, near the hut where Toribio Valles lay dying, an owl hooted mournfully from the pine-trees, and the Indian opened his heavy eyes, and murmured to the watchers the refrain that amounts to a prophecy among his people: "*Canta el tecolote, el Yndio mucrd.** The Gods be with my daughter." Then the attenuated frame gave one great convulsive shudder, the stern patient face grew rigid, and father and child went together.

* * * * *

Friar Blas Alvarez wielded great influence in that part of the country, and the life of an Indian more or less was nothing as compared with a scandal in a monastery, yet even so the nephew of Friar Blas was tried for his monstrous crime and sentenced. But deference to the churchly influence modified the penalty, and Cipriano Alvarez was condemned to be hanged in his ninety-ninth year, wearing, meanwhile, about his neck a noosed rope, that all should recognise in him a condemned murderer.

Within the decade broke out the war of Mexican Independence, and the times were sorely troubled. Later, when the Laws of Reform were enacted, the church had to yield up her broad domains, and to Cipriano Alvarez came, by heritage, the great hacienda of Amatla, which had been held as individual estate by his uncle, Friar Blas. Other times bring other matters.

Under the new rule and order of things the old story was forgotten, its scene lying as it did in a remote and then, before the era of railways, somewhat inaccessible region. So that when the time came for the execution of his sentence, the crime and the sentence of Alvarez were buried in records long reduced to ashes in one or another of the country's epochs of warfare, and its memory was buried in the hearts of a few of his oldest retainers, who were unlikely to recall it, and Cipriano Alvarez died in his bed, at the ripe old age of a hundred years.

* * * * *

"But it seems but yesterday it happened," mutters old Romualdo; "and to think he has worn the rope that he might still remember! He must have loved the *Yndito* truly, if fiercely. And he has never loved a woman since then. Oh! the dull blows of her soft body on the rocks! and the thunder of the horse's hoofs down Cubilete! and the wild, wild screams of Andronica, as he dragged her onward! Just as to-night you heard them—I, who know, I tell you! *Si, señores!* for I was servant then to Don Cipriano. God rest his soul!"

Y. H. Addis.

* "When hoots the owl, the Indian dies."

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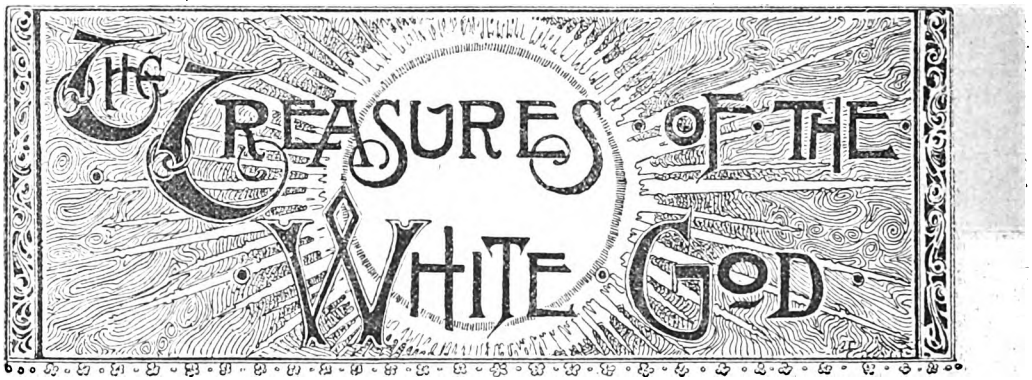

The Story of a Shameful Crime.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE AZTEC TREASURE.

WITH eyes of devout affection, esteem and pity, Adrian Burgoyne devoured the counterfeit of the fair young girl he loved.

The possession of that picture marked the climax of as strange and dramatic a coalition of emissary of the law and adjudged criminal as ever yet was ratified.

Upon that fateful evening when Mr. Detective Dean intruded upon the solitude of Burgoyne, it was to prove that his earnest protestations of friendship and devotion were sincere.

He narrated his pitiful story as might a culprit of the *via dolorosa* to a father confessor. From first to last he depicted his half-hearted honesty as a detective officer, his acceptance of a bribe, his shame, his remorse, his contrition, and its atonement.

"I live but for one object—to clear the tarnish of bribe-taking from my record," he told Burgoyne earnestly. "I know you are an innocent man. Richard Sheldon and Colonel Lytle stand, self-accused, as perjurers and conspirators, in their overheard conversation, only I must secure positive proofs ere we menace them openly, ere you reveal your true identity."

So these two clasped hands over the yawning abyss of obscurity and fear, and the swift, clever proceedings of the veteran officer soon began to cast a cheering radiance over its dark depths.

The murder of Lytle shocked Dean, but it did not turn him from his close shadow of Sheldon. The latter was "up to some new scheme," and he guessed its import—flight. It was he who warned the bank, it was he who had placed a score of obstacles in Sheldon's course of flight.

"He aims to secure a large sum of money, and depart," he stated to Burgoyne. "We can only delay him—we dare not arrest him yet. Lytle's death complicates affairs, for he might have been frightened, cajoled or bribed into betraying his accomplice. As it is, I am daily weaving a close net of circumstantial proof about the unwary Sheldon."

"But the girl! Patrice!" was the burden of Burgoyne's constant, fervid cry. "Find her. She may be in poverty, in peril. Her safety must be precedent to every other consideration."

"Yes, to find her—to have her evidence concerning her years of tacit imprisonment, would form a strong claim against Sheldon. She is probably in hiding somewhere—in terror of these villains, perhaps in disguise, working at starvation wages to keep herself alive. An advertisement in the papers would be construed by her to emanate from these plotters. She may hopelessly consider you dead. Ah! I have it!"

And the result of a further consultation led to the culmination that the lurking Sheldon had just witnessed.

"I found Mrs. Loring at Lynde—the woman with whom Patrice Ringold lived for so many years," narrated Dean. "She happened to have that single photograph of the girl."

"And of what special value is it to us in a search for her?" queried Burgoyne curiously.

"You shall see to-morrow. I will then take that photograph and have a hundred copies of it made. I will send one to every police official in the city. From it they may identify the girl and recognise her if found. I know the skilful methods of the department—none better."

"Oh, you give me hope!" exclaimed Burgoyne fervently, with an affectionate glance at the picture of his lost love.

"Once we find her, I shall take her affidavit, yours and my own, and present them to a magistrate. This case of conspiracy, kidnapping and fraud against Richard Sheldon will be complete. I shall arrest him. The only fear I have is regarding the disproval of your guilt in the anarchist murder."

"Never mind me!" cried Burgoyne vehemently. "Find Patrice, punish the villain, Sheldon, and, once I restore to her the fortune I secured in Mexico, I am willing to go back to my lonely prison cell, proud, thankful that I have righted a great wrong!"

"The fortune—Mexico!" The listening Richard Sheldon started wildly, and his sordid heart gave a great leap of avaricious joy.

"By the way, Burgoyne," spoke the detective again, "that is a point you did not fully explain to me. You rescued the treasure contained in the White God, then?"

"Yes, anticipating Lytle, sealing up the idol afresh, escaping from the cave and bringing it north in safety."

"And it is really valuable?"

"It consists of precious stones mainly. I have it hidden in a safe place—not here. I shall to-morrow, as a sure precaution against accident, put it in some safety deposit vault, subject to your order or mine."

"I would. Its loss would be a calamity, after all your trouble. Come, you dare venture a little stroll with me.

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We can continue our discussion of our plans in the outer air."

The two men left the room. Richard Sheldon drew back from his place of espionage, with a face one void of amazement, concern, cupidity.

He was menaced—direfully, fatally. The detective, Dean, was working day and night to convict him of crime.

But—he was warned! Ah! he would elude them. They should close the entangling net too late—the groping hands of justice should never claim him as a victim.

He was enlightened; the Ringold treasure was in the possession of Adrian Burgoyne.

With the morrow it would be unearthed from its secret hiding-place and transferred to a more secure spot.

"It shall never reach its destination; Patrice Ringold shall never be found by these men!" muttered the schemer determinedly.

He set to work briskly, as new and forcible ideas entered his mind. He resolved that for the next twenty-four hours Adrian Burgoyne should not leave his sight for the space of a single moment.

For an hour Sheldon worked with a slender piece of wire, reached through the transom, to secure the one clue to the identity of Patrice Ringold—the photograph. He pushed it to the floor, and then, though the lower crack of the door dragged it finally into reach. Then he lay down on the bed in the apartment, to watch, listen and await developments.

Adrain Burgoyne returned alone to his room. His first thought was of the photograph. It was gone. In consternation and alarm he searched for it, feared it had been blown through the window by the wind, and, after a persistent quest in the stone-paved court below, came to the conclusion that Dean must have taken it with him to secure copies.

At nine o'clock the next morning he left the hotel. A cautious form shadowed him—that of Richard Sheldon.

Burgoyne reached a rickety-looking house and entered it, and Sheldon awaited his return outside.

It was here that Burgoyne had stayed upon his first return from Mexico, and here, in the attic, he had secreted the treasure he had found in the Aztec idol.

When he came down to the street again he carried a bag in one hand.

He started briskly back towards the business portion of the city.

"It all works my way," chuckled his tireless shadower. "That is the Ringold treasure. He has unearthed it; he purposes taking it to some safety deposit vault, as he announced to Dean. Now, then, for a final, a decisive move!"

The merchant quickened his pace. Just as Adrian Burgoyne reached a street corner, and was about to turn into a new thoroughfare, there was a rapid step at his side.

He thrilled to sharp dread and excitement as a firm hand clutched his arm and an ominous voice sounded in his ear.

"One moment, Mr. Adrian Burgoyne," it spoke—"*I know you!*"

CHAPTER XXXII.

For Love or Gold!

"I know you!"

The words rang out prophetically and with direful menace upon the startled hearing of Adrian Burgoyne, so full were the tones in which they were uttered of triumph, resentment and ferocity.

A glance betrayed the speaker, despite his disguise. For a moment the two men looked into each other's soul, and Richard Sheldon never relaxed his grasp of Burgoyne's arm.

"Release me!" breathed the latter finally, trying to break loose from the clutch of his vindictive captor.

"No!" spoke Sheldon resolutely, "make no scene, no resistance, if you are wise!" he hissed. "Do you see that cab approaching us?"

He indicated a vehicle rapidly nearing them as he spoke.

"What if I do?" demanded Burgoyne, debating resistance, an assault, flight, in his mind.

"I shall hail its driver."

"What is that to me?"

"Liberty—life!" replied the other, with swift impressiveness. "I shall get into that cab; you will precede me."

"No!" spoke Burgoyne determinedly.

"And I say, yes!"

"Wait and see!"

"We shall. Hey, cabby!"

The driver turned to the curb and halted there.

"Engaged?"

"No, sir."

"Get in," spoke Sheldon, in a menacing undertone, to his companion.

"I have no desire to accompany you."

"It is not a matter of inclination, but necessary. I will wait ten seconds. If you do not step into that cab at the termination of that time, I shall act."

"How?" Burgoyne quivered restively.

"By calling the police, and delivering you over to justice as an escaped convict."

That meant disaster, the firing of a mine not yet prepared for an explosion. He hesitated.

"And if I go with you?" asked Burgoyne temporising.

"You will give me an hour of your time, listening to what I have to say. Then you shall be free to go where you will. I swear it!"

"*You* swear it!" fired up Burgoyne, hotly and contemptuously. "Your past dealings——"

"Never mind the past! Ten seconds! Is it yonder police officer, or the cab?"

With a perturbed face, Adrian Burgoyne stepped into the vehicle.

The merchant slammed the door, and mumbled a direction, his residence, to the driver.

"You said an hour, I believe?" spoke Burgoyne.

"I said an hour. You will not regret the interview."

Then perfect silence—glum suspicions on the part of the one, grim forboding with the other—prevailed, until ten minutes later, Adrian Burgoyne found himself face to face with Richard Sheldon, in his sumptuous library.

"I will come to the point briefly," spoke the merchant. "I thought you dead. It was a trick of Dean's. I know your plans. By acting first, and before your kind designs to convict me are ripe, I fortify my case. I can touch an electric button at my hand, and summon an officer of the law. I have a bargain to make with you."

"A bargain?" repeated Burgoyne suspiciously, never taking his hand from the bag he carried, nor his eyes from the furtive, watchful face of his host.

"Yes."

"Name it."

"I relinquish all prosecution or betrayal of your identity, for a certain consideration."

"What?"

"That handbag at your side and its contents!"

With a vivid start, Burgoyne rose to his feet.

"Never!" he cried, with resolute eyes. "It is not mine. It is a sacred trust. Arrest me if you will. The law will restore it to its rightful owner—not to you."

"We shall see!" hissed the baffled and malevolent schemer.

"I shall defend it with my life," avowed Burgoyne aggressively, placing his hand to his breast, and revealing the end of a weapon.

"Oh! I shall not try force," sneered the other lightly.

"You refuse?"

"Decidedly!"

"Then you are free to go."

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He pointed to the door as he spoke, Burgoyne hesitated. Was a trap awaiting him at its threshold? There was a latent, sinister menace in the manner of the merchant that he did not fancy.

"You will not arrest me?" he questioned.

"Not now."

Burgoyne backed to the door, still keeping close watch and word over the precious fortune in his possession.

"Only——"

He halted.

"Well?" he queried.

"You doom the woman you love!"

"Patrice!" cried Burgoyne, in a revelation of anguish. "Ah! wretched man! I understand you now!"

"I thought you would," gloated Sheldon. "Listen to me, Adrian Burgoyne. I am no vain plotter. You have the best of me, but not at this hour. The girl, Patrice!—I know where she is. In a single hour I can reach her—convey, compel her to accompany me to a foreign place, put her out of the way—*by accident!*"

His listener shuddered at the cold-blooded emphasis employed on those two last words.

"Speak, miscreant!" he gasped, in a frenzy of horror. "What do you want?"

"Patrice Ringold's fortune, in exchange for Patrice Ringold's liberty and life!"

"TAKE IT!"

In the strength of a mighty love, in the glamour and fidelity of a devotion that enwrapt soul and mind, all sordid considerations vanishing to nothingness. Adrian Burgoyne sprang to meet the price exacted.

"Take it!" he cried, in fevered suspense. "Her life, her safety, is all in all. Take the gold; it has brought nothing but wreck, blight, and ruin. Fill your false, craven heart with it, and sink to perdition! The girl, Patrice! Give her freedom—send me to her. Love will find a way to wreath her path with wealth!"

Fairly amazed, the plotter caught up the bag as it landed with a crash on the desk before him.

"Truth for truth, fairness for fairness," he spoke finally. "I will not deceive you. Read that."

He flung a letter to his visitor. The latter perused it eagerly.

It was from the matron of a reformatory in the city, and it acknowledged the receipt of one week's board in advance for his niece, Patrice.

"And that," continued Sheldon, scrawling a few lines and tossing the document to Burgoyne.

It was an order for the release of Patrice, "niece of Richard Sheldon," and was signed by the latter.

"Are you satisfied?"

"Yes."

"One other thing——"

"What is it?"

"I make no move against you, if you leave me to my fate."

Burgoyne was silent. He had found Patrice, but at what a cost!

He walked from the library, conning the directions on the order. Patrice—Patrice! What was gold, vengeance, to her bonny love?

Richard Sheldon hastened back to the library, once his visitor was gone.

In feverish haste, he tore open the hand-satchel.

Zounds! what royal tribute, what a glaring mass of riches!

Gold—a heap of it—pearls, diamonds, emeralds! He was an expert in the value of gems.

"A million!" he gloated. "Oh! surely that! Now for Europe—Amsterdam—a castle in Italy. Ah! I have won my prize at last!"

He crammed some clothes into a portmanteau. His mind was fixed on a plan of flight—by the rear door, to the nearest suburban railway station by a cab, the direct city trail broken, an east-bound train!

At the door, a man coming in confronted him. Sheldon uttered an exclamation of impatience.

"Davenant?" he muttered.

"Yes. I wanted to see you. A plausible story about your pretended niece being a wayward, troublesome girl, will hold her in safe hands until your further orders."

"Yes! yes!" interrupted Sheldon quickly. "Never mind that now. What do I owe you?"

"Two hundred, you promised."

"There is more." And Sheldon handed the astonished secret inquiry agent a large roll of notes.

"Thank you; but does this mean that I am dismissed?" queried Davenant, in a dissatisfied and injured tone.

"No, but I am going away."

"Oh! When you return, I may be of service to you. Oh! Mr. Sheldon!"

About to leave the house, Davenant halted.

"Well, what is it?" demanded Sheldon, irritated at the delay.

"The Golcondas?"

"The mining stock?"

"Yes."

"What about it?"

"You bade me make some inquiries."

"Yes; but don't trifle about it now. I am in a hurry."

"Trifle!" ejaculated Davenant "Why, sir! it's run up forty points."

"What!"

"Yes, sir. The shares took a turn on the stock exchange yesterday afternoon—new lode struck—big pay is in sight. It closed at 60. It started at 78 this morning. They predict par by noon."

Par? Golcondas at par! The excited Sheldon made a rapid mental calculation. He hesitated, and the man who hesitates in such a fateful situation as his own, is lost.

To sell meant ten thousand pounds, hard cash—small fortune in itself—ready money in abundance until he sold the jewels.

But he could not go to the stock exchange himself. No! He would trust to no man's honour. For all he knew, Adrian Burgoyne was preparing to accuse him, to stop his flight even now. If not, Mr. Detective Dean certainly would when he learnt of the reckless bargain of his *protégé*.

Still, he coveted that ten thousand pounds. While he was about it, he might as well make a clean sweep he decided, and success made him bold.

He took from a compartment in the desk a package of bonds he had concluded to abandon as so much waste paper.

"Golcondas," he explained to the agent. "Here is my authority to sell."

"At par?"

"No, at whatever the market rules. A two per cent. commission ought to make you anxious to make a good bargain!"

"I thank you for your liberality and confidence, Mr. Sheldon."

"Sell as soon as you can."

"And report here?"

"No. Let me see."

Sheldon consulted a time-table. Then he pencilled an address.

"I will await your coming to that place until six o'clock this evening," he said.

"I will be there long before that."

"Don't bring a cheque."

"No, sir—the ready cash."

"In notes of large denomination."

"Your instructions shall be carefully executed."

Davenant left the house. The merchant left it, too, a few minutes later.

He skulked through the rear court, reached a retired street, took a tram, then a cab, changed twice to other vehicles, and finally reached a surburban station on the line of an eastern railway.

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Here he sat down to wait for the express, due at 6.27 p.m., and for Davenant, and the proceeds of the bonds.

He was self-satisfied, triumphant, sanguine of a safe and speedy flight.

He had come to the city, seven years previous, a scheming, penniless pettifogger.

He was leaving it, treasure-rich, laden with splendid spoil, assured of a future of luxury and opulence—the possessor of a cool million, in rare, glittering jewels!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

For Friendship's Sake.

"Patrice!"

That was the beginning, the end, the all in all of Adrian Burgoyne's fervent thoughts, as he left the home of Richard Sheldon.

He had staked everything on the issue of the moment. He had acted independently of the designs of Dean; he had bartered gold for love.

The marplot of his destiny would fly, enriched; Patrice would live, a pauper; but oh! what mattered it all—the prison servitude, the difficult struggle for pelf, the sordid victory of Sheldon, so that he, Burgoyne, won the pearl of precious price—Patrice!

The place that the order Sheldon had written named was near the southern edge of the city. The presentation of the document would insure immediate release of Patrice.

He longed for wings to fly to her side, to tell her how love had inspired a mighty sacrifice. He knew she would sanction his reckless bargain.

He ran along half-a-dozen streets, intent on taking a tram to reach his destination. Of a sudden he halted as he passed a building. It abruptly occurred to him that the rooms of his friend Dean were in that structure. The latter had told him to report at his own hotel every hour, as something might occur requiring his co-operation. His present plan involved several hours' time. He would run up to the detective's apartments, and report.

Dean was just leaving, as he tapped at his door. He scanned Burgoyne's excited face questioningly.

"What has happened?" he demanded. "Your manner tells me that you have made some discovery."

Burgoyne hesitated.

How would this uncompromising emissary of the law take the intelligence he was in honour bound to divulge?

He blurted out the plain, practical facts of the case. Dean stood transfixed.

"Gave up the treasure!—bargained with that soulless scoundrel!" he gasped, fire in his eye, stored-up wrath in voice and gusture. "Man! you have played the coward!"

"For her sake!" pleaded Burgoyne.

"For her sake? Why! in twenty-four hours we would have found her. You have bartered justice for love, when you might have had both. Don't speak! I am boiling over. I did not think it of you. You have spoiled everything. Wait here, Adrian Burgoyne, as you value liberty, happiness, stay here, in this room, till I send for you or come to you."

"But Patrice?" demurred the anxious lover.

"Do you understand me?" roared Dean, bristling with rage. "Either you obey me and help me undo your wretched work, or I wash my hands of the whole case!"

"I will remain—I will obey you," murmured Burgoyne, fairly subdued at the energetic wrath of his companion.

"To think of compromising with that unscrupulous scoundrel, Richard Sheldon, when the rope was fairly dangling for him; to consider yourself, the girl, love, when my reputation as a shrewd police officer was at stake! Burgoyne, I didn't think it of you!"

Abashed, wretched enough, Adrian Burgoyne sat alone in the detective's apartments, to reflect dubiously over the mistake his impulses had led him into. He had time to reflect now. Judgment and emotion at war, he was minded one moment to hasten to Patrice, at all hazards, without loss of time; the next instant he was overwhelmed, as he realised that, in interfering with the delicate machinery of Dean's plans, he had really placed the intrepid officer at a disadvantage.

Mr. Detective Dean puffed down the street like a steam engine, talking to himself, gesticulating energetically, angry at his client, and sorry for him, at one and the same time.

He stopped at the first telephone office he came to. Ringing up the nearest police station of the department, he soon had the transmitter to his lips, giving his instructions.

They were delivered to the lieutenant in charge of the detectives, and, with the celerity of a commander giving orders to his subordinate officers on the battle-field, Dean notified one officer to watch the departing trains, another to haunt the docks of the steamship lines, a third to watch the merchant's residence, a fourth to guard the vicinity of his business office.

The order all along the line was terse and emphatic: "Arrest Richard Sheldon on sight!"

Only too well the detective knew, that now, possessed of a vast fortune, Sheldon would flee the city promptly. He hailed a cab and drove to the merchant's home, but it was purely a visit of formality—the man he sought had departed.

Next, his office; no Sheldon there. Then Dean made a flying trip through the brokers' offices near the stock exchange. No one had seen Sheldon for two days. He seemed to have retired from active dealing; but a broker, overhearing the question of the detective, said:

"I don't know if Sheldon is about or not, but he's selling this morning."

"Selling what?" asked Dean curiously.

"Bonds. I see his name on the official blackboard—Golcondas, at eighty-three."

To the stock exchange the detective repaired. Amid its wild din of men selling and buying the stocks of the world, he soon made out coherency.

One man was more active than the others—a young broker, a newly-fledged Napoleon of finance—who was accompanied by a sleek-looking but anxious-faced man, who bore a handful of bonds, and who seemed to be giving him instructions.

An intelligent look came into the eyes of Dean, as he recognised this man.

"A private detective man," he murmured, "and the same one I have seen so often in confab with Sheldon of late. I understand—Sheldon has authorised him to sell some stocks. Here is my clue. Where the jackal is the lion cannot be far away. This man will lead me to my quarry."

Dean went into a cigar shop near by, and perfected a new disguise. Then he set to pertinaciously shadow the man whom Richard Sheldon had deputed to sell the mining stock, Davenant.

The latter was all business—all leisure, too. It was fully three o'clock in the afternoon before he closed out the last share of stock. It was four when he settled up with the purchasers, on a cash basis.

With ten thousand pounds in his pockets he went to a restaurant, ate a hearty meal after his engrossing labour of the day, consulted his watch, and then ordered the waiter to send in one of the cabmen whose vehicles lined the curb outside.

At an adjoining table the disguised Dean listened eagerly to eve ry word he spoke.

"I want to reach —— Station by six o'clock," he announced to the driver.

"Yes, sir."

"How long will it take to get there?"

"Forty minutes."

"Very good. Wait for me outside for half-an-hour. Consider yourself engaged."

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Then Davenant prolonged the luxury of a royal lunch, topped off with expensive wines, and settled down to a further enjoyment of the novel situation of possessing a small fortune, for a few hours at least, while Dean glided from the restaurant.

He secured a cab, and drove to his rooms. There, dejected, consumed with impatience, he found Burgoyne.

Dean forced him into the vehicle. Briefly, pointedly, he withheld his discoveries and his theory that Sheldon was waiting at the suburban station for Davenant to deliver the proceeds of the bond sales.

They were delayed twice on their drive—once by a block, once by a broken trace. It was dusk when they reached the vicinity of the little suburban station. Dean halted the cab some distance away from it. Then, alighting, he gave Burgoyne his orders.

He was to approach the station from the north; Dean would close in from the west. The latter would take the initiative, and an agreed-on signal was to announce a discovery or peril.

Adrian Burgoyne neared the station just as a porter was lighting the lamps in its waiting-room. Near the platform stood a cab. He peered through the end window of the station.

There stood Richard Sheldon. He was just receiving a bundle of bank-notes from a companion — Davenant, the private detective.

These he stored in the handbag he carried. Then he figured on a slip of paper, counted out some money, tendered it to Davenant, and walked over to a time-table impatiently.

Davenant proceeded to the cab. About to step into it, he started, peered down the dusk-haunted platform, and hurried back into the station again.

The lurker at the end window bent his ear eagerly, as he addressed the merchant:

"Mr. Sheldon!" he spoke sharply and excitedly.

"Yes—what is it?" demanded Sheldon, wheeling abruptly.

"Outside!" quavered the other.

"Well?"

"Dean!"

"The detective?"

"Yes."

"You don't mean it?"

Richard Sheldon turned pale. A low unhurried consultation took place, at the end of which Davenant returned to the cab, and departed with the words:

"The express stops at the level crossing, four hundred yards along the line. You can catch it there."

Richard Sheldon's free hand sought his side coat-pocket, and a grim look settled over his face, as he started down the line, Burgoyne keeping close at his heels.

An open space prevented the latter shadowing his man, except at a distance. In order not to lose sight of him, he ran back, and then crawled under the open platform, gaining the line near a pile of boxes.

Just at that moment Richard Sheldon came into view. His nerves were all a quiver. He knew what was coming, but he did not quail. He was prepared for it.

From a crouching attitude behind a box, Detective Dean suddenly sprang up to confront him.

"Richard Sheldon, I want you."

The officer expected to see his prospective prisoner come to a halt with a shock, from sheer consternation. Not so, however. He, too, made the serious mistake of extending a pair of handcuffs, instead of a revolver.

Quick as a flash, Sheldon sprang forward. He saw his advantage, and pursued it promptly. He gave the box a push. It swung back, and the disconcerted Dean with it. It toppled and fell. The next moment it crashed to the platform, with the reckless detective under it, one arm and one leg being pinioned beneath it.

The fugitive financier directed a swift glance towards the station. No one was in sight. At the crossing directly north a shrill whistle cut the air, as the express thundered down to a stop.

He drew a revolver, glaring demoniacally at his helpless foe. Then he pocketed it again, drew forth, instead, a long keen-bladed knife, and, with a savage growl, sprang at the prostrate Dean.

"I'll seal your lips, meddler, traitor!" he hissed. "Noiseless death, the best! Take that!"

The knife was poised. Its baleful gleam told the shrinking and helpless detective what he had to expect.

Just then, however, was an interruption. Just then the appalled Burgoyne crept from under the platform.

"Hold!" he gasped, "or I fire——"

A cry of dismay completed the sentence. He found himself unarmed. In crawling under the platform he had lost his only weapon—a revolver.

"You, too!" hissed the ferocious Sheldon. "This one first. Your blood be on your own heads!"

Toot—toot!

The train at the crossing was starting up again. He had no time to spare. He made a powerful sweep with the knife.

It descended.

But not upon the figure of his intended victim.

Flinging himself forward, Adrian Burgoyne interposed his form as a shield for his imperilled friend.

One keen, searing contact, a gush of blood, a thousand darting pains, and the knife sank deep in his unsheltered breast.

With fading glance, he saw the assassin speed away towards the approaching train.

With fluttering senses, as he realised that he had saved the life of his companion at the peril of his own, the majestic words seemed to permeate his soul like a balm of peace and satisfaction supreme:

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(To be concluded.)

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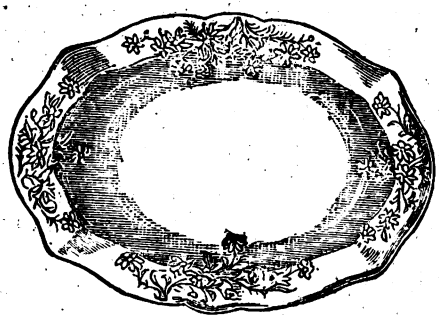

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 375. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 7TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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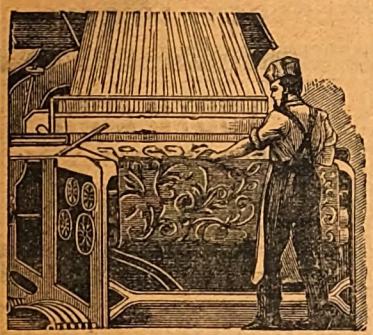

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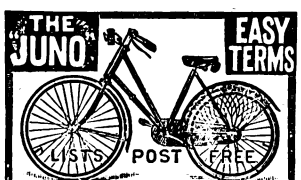

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ONE PENNY

SHORT STORIES.

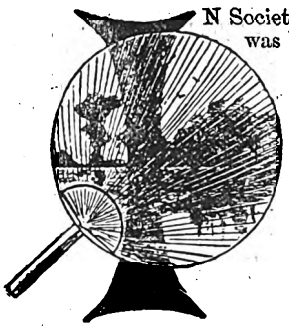
EDITED BY

C. ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 375.] For the Week ending March 7th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

Was He a Coward?

Translated from the French of Guy de Maupassant.



IN Society they called him "Adonis Querne." His name was Viscount Gontran de Querne.

An orphan, and master of a large fortune, he made quite a figure, as they say. He had style, readiness enough to appear witty, a certain natural grace, a proud, well-bred bearing, a fierce moustache, and a gentle eye—the combination women like.

He was invited everywhere, was in demand as a partner at a dance, and inspired men with the smiling unfriendliness that a strong face usually begets. He was suspected of a few love affairs that go to make a bachelor interesting. He was happy, calm, and self satisfied, known to be an expert swordsman, and a good shot.

"If I ever fight a duel," he used to say, "I shall choose pistols. I shall be sure then of killing my man."

One evening he went to the theatre with two ladies and their husbands, and after the play invited them to go to Tortoni's for an ice. When they had been seated there for a few minutes, he observed that a gentleman at a neighbouring table was keeping his eyes obstinately fixed on one of the ladies of de Querne's party. She seemed troubled and uncomfortable, and held her head down. Finally she said to her husband:

"That man is staring at me. I don't know him, do you?"

The husband, who had seen nothing, looked up, but said at once: "No, not at all."

The young wife continued, half smiling, and half annoyed:

"It's very provoking; that individual spoils my ice for me."

Her husband shrugged his shoulders: "Pshaw! Pay no attention to him. If we took notice of every loafer we met there'd be no end to it."

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But the Viscount rose abruptly.

He would not permit a strange man to spoil an ice of his offering. The insult was to him, since it was by his invitation that his friends were at the café. The thing devolved upon him to settle.

He approached the man and said to him:

"Sir, I cannot tolerate your manner of staring at these ladies. I beg you will desist."

The other replied:

"Do you want to make a row about it?"

The Viscount set his teeth and continued: "Be careful, sir, or you will provoke me beyond bounds."

The man answered by a single word, a vile name that rang from one end of the café to the other, and had the effect of a spring on every one at the tables.

Everyone turned round, the three waiters spun on their heels like tops, the two *dames du comptoir* jumped and then leant forward to see, and a great silence fell. Then all at once a sharp sound cut the air. The Viscount had struck his adversary in the face. Everybody rose to interfere. The two men exchanged cards.

* * * * *

When the Viscount reached home he walked up and down his room, too agitated to reflect. The single idea of a duel hovered in his mind, but without awakening the smallest emotion. He had done as he ought; shown himself as he wished to be. He would be talked about, approved, congratulated.

He repeated aloud as we often speak when the mind is wrougl t up: "What a brute that man was."

Then he sat down to think. In the morning he must find his seconds. Who should they be? Men of position and standing! He finally chose the Marquis de la Tour-Noire and Colonel Bourdin, a great lord and a soldier; their names would look well in the newspapers. He felt thirsty and drank three glasses of water, one after the other: then he began to walk up and down again. He felt very determined. If he showed himself bold and resolute, insisted on rigorous conditions, and demanded a serious duel, a duel to the death, probably his adversary would withdraw and apologise.

He took up the card he had drawn from his pocket and thrown on the table and read it, as he had already read it at a glance in the café and in the cab coming home by the light of every street lamp:

George Lamill,
51, Moncey Street.

Nothing more.

He examined the way the letters followed each other. George Lamill! Who was he? What did he do? Why had he stared at the woman? How revo'ting that a stranger, an unknown man, should trouble the course of your existence suddenly, because he chose to look insolently at a woman. The Viscount repeated aloud:

"What a brute!"

Then he stood motionless awhile, in a sort of trance, his eyes fixed on the card. Rage was awakening in him against the piece of pasteboard, a rage mingled with hate, and with a strange feeling of uneasiness. The whole affair was idiotic! He took an open penknife and stuck it into the printed name as if he were stabbing somebody.

So he was going to fight a duel! Should he choose swords or pistols, for he considered himself the insulted person. With swords he ran less risk, but by choosing pistols he had the chance of making his adversary withdraw. A duel with swords is rarely fatal; mutual prudence keeps the combatants too far apart. With pistols he seriously hazarded his life; but he might also get off with all the honours of the situation and without any meeting.

He spoke aloud:

"I must be firm. He will be frightened."

The sound of his voice made him shiver, and he glanced round. He felt very nervous. He drank another glass of water, undressed, and went to bed.

In bed, with the lights out, he closed his eyes and began to think:

"I have all day to-morrow to attend to things. I must go to sleep now, so as to have my head clear."

The covering seemed oppressive; he could not fall asleep. He turned over and over, lying five minutes on his back, then on his right side, then on his left.

He felt thirsty again. He rose to get a drink. Then a genuine anxiety seized him:

"Am I afraid?"

Why did his heart beat so wildly at all the familiar sounds in the room? When the clock was going to strike, the little click of the spring made him start, and he was obliged to open his mouth to breathe for several seconds after, he felt so oppressed. He began to reason with himself on the possibility of such a thing:

"Am I afraid?"

No, assuredly he could not be afraid when he had just announced himself resolved to push the thing to extremity, when he had such a determination to fight. But he was so deeply moved that he said to himself:

"Can one be afraid in spite of one's self?"

And the doubt grew upon him—an anxiety, a dread; if a force stronger than his will overcame him, what should he do? He would go to the place of meeting, because he willed to appear there. But if he trembled? If he lost consciousness? And he thought of his position, his reputation, and his name.

He felt a compelling wish to see his own face in the mirror. He lighted a candle. When he saw his reflection in the polished glass he hardly recognised it, it was like one he had never seen. His eyes looked enormous, and he was pale; he was certainly very pale.

He stood there before the mirror. He even looked at his tongue to see if he were feverish, and all at once the thought shot through him:

"The day after to-morrow, at this time, I may be dead."

And his heart began to beat furiously again.

"The day after to-morrow this, that I see in the glass, may be no more. I am here, I look at myself, I feel that I am alive, and in twenty-four hours I may be laid on that bed dead, my eyes closed, cold, inanimate, ended!"

He went back towards his bed, and could see himself stretched out on his back on the very sheets he had just left. His face had fallen in like a dead man's, and his hands were leaden as if they would never move again.

He hated his bed, and in order not to see it went into his smoking-room. He mechanically lighted a cigar and began to walk about. He felt chilled, and was about to ring for his servant, but he paused with his hand raised above the bell:

"The fellow will see that I am afraid."

He did not ring, he built a fire himself. His hands trembled a little with a nervous recoil when they touched anything. His mind wandered; his confused thoughts began to grow fleeting, broken off, and painful; fumes clouded his mind as if he had been drinking.

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He repeated continually:

"What shall I do? What will become of me?"

His whole body vibrated, shaken by chills; he rose, and going to the window, opened the curtains. Day was breaking—a summer day. The flushed sky warmed the roofs and walls of the city. A long beam of light, like a caress from the rising sun, wrapped the awaking world, and with the light swiftly, and almost with the pain of a shock, hope sprang up in the Viscount's heart! What a fool he was, to be overcome with fear before anything was decided, before his seconds had seen George Lamill's, before he even knew there would really be a duel.

He dressed, and left the house with a firm step. He repeated to himself, as he walked:

"I must be very decided. I must prove that I am not afraid."

His seconds, the Marquis and the Colonel, consented to act, shook hands with him, and discussed the conditions.

The Colonel asked: "You are in earnest about the character of the duel itself?"

The Viscount replied: "Thoroughly in earnest."

The Marquis added: "You insist upon pistols?"

"Yes."

"Leave us to settle the rest."

The Viscount pronounced with dry, jerky articulation: "Twenty paces, at the word of command, raising the weapon instead of lowering it. Shots exchanged till there is a serious wound."

The Colonel remarked that they were excellent conditions, the Viscount was a good shot, and all the chances were on his side.

Then they went away, the Viscount returned home to wait for them. His agitation, which had lessened for a time, now increased every moment. He could feel that chill running along his arms, his legs, his chest, shaking his whole body. He could not sit still. There was not a trace of moisture in his mouth, and he continually made a little clacking sound with his tongue as if to moisten his palate.

He wished to breakfast, but could not eat. Then he thought drinking would give him courage, so he sent for a bottle of brandy, and drank six small glasses in succession. A burning heat rushed over him, accompanied by giddiness.

"I have it now," he thought, "this is the thing!"

But at the end of an hour he had emptied the bottle, and his agitation had become intolerable. He felt an insane desire to roll on the ground, to scream, to tear something with his teeth.

A jingling at the bell so excited him that he had not the strength to rise and receive his seconds.

He did not dare to speak to them, for fear they would guess all from his altered voice.

The Colonel spoke: "Everything is settled according to your own conditions. At first your adversary claimed the privileges of the offended person, but he yielded almost immediately and accepted everything. His seconds are two army officers."

The Viscount said: "Thank you."

"Excuse us if we only come in to go directly away, but we have a thousand things to arrange. We must have a good surgeon, as the duel goes on till there is a serious wound, and you know cold lead is no joke. We must find a place for the meeting near some dwelling, where the wounded man may be carried, if necessary, and so on. At least we have two or three hours to do it in."

Again the Viscount said: "Thank you."

The Colonel asked: "Are you all right? Not shaky?"

"Not at all, thank you."

The two men went away.

* * * * *

When he was alone again he believed he was going mad. The servant had lighted the lamps, so he sat down at the table to write letters. Having traced "This is my will" at the top of the page, he sprang up and walked down the room, feeling himself incapable of writing two ideas, of taking any resolve, or deciding upon anything.

What was it all? He was to fight a duel. He wished it, it was his settled intention; and yet he knew, in spite of every effort of his will, every assertion of his mind, that he was not going to have the necessary strength even to go to the place of meeting. He tried to fancy the duel, his own attitude, and his opponent's bearing.

From time to time his teeth chattered in his head. He took up Chateauvillard's duelling code and tried to read it. Then he asked himself:

"Has my adversary practised in shooting-galleries? Is he known? Has he reputation? How could I find out?"

He remembered Baron de Vaux's book on noted shots with the pistol, and went through it from beginning to end. George Lamill was not mentioned. But if the man was not an expert he would not have accepted at once that dangerous weapon under mortal conditions.

He opened a case of pistols, took out one and stood up as if to fire, raising his arm. He trembled from head to foot and the barrel wavered in every direction.

Then he said: "The thing is impossible. I cannot fight a duel like this."

He examined the little black hole in the end of the barrel that spits out death, and thought of disgrace, whispers in clubs, sneers in Society, women's contempt, allusions in the newspapers, insults from cowards.

He kept examining the weapon, and pressing back the trigger suddenly saw a cap under it like a little red flame. Through neglect the pistol had been put away loaded. It gave him a confused, inexplicable pleasure.

If he could not stand up before that man with calm, unblenching front, he would be lost, branded, outcast. He was not capable of assuming or keeping that impassive front, he knew it, he felt it. But he must be a brave man, because he wished to fight a duel! He must be brave since—the thought did not even shape itself clearly in his mind; he opened his mouth, put the barrel of the pistol down his throat and pulled the trigger.

When his valet rushed in, attracted by the report, he found him dead, lying on his back. The blood had splashed the white paper on the table and made a great red blot under the four words:

"This is my will——"

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I.

"What a lovely face!" murmured Ernest Moore.

He was an artist to his finger-tips, and certainly the girl was charming. She was sipping her tea in the shade of a palm and the painter's trained observation noted that the glove that held the Sevrès cup had seen service on many days, and that she was the most plainly-attired woman in the fashionable crowd that thronged his cousin's drawing-room.

Lady Cameron caught the phrase in passing and smiled.

"I am glad you admire Helen. She is one of my pet *protégées*—a school-friend of Vera, you know. Her people lost their money a few years ago and they are horribly poor, I am afraid. It is positively dreadful when one thinks that a girl with her appearance should be obliged to go about in a last season's gown. It is such things," said her ladyship solemnly, "which make one wonder at the ways of Providence!"

Moore laughed.

"Do you want to be introduced?" she asked.

"What a question! Of course I do."

A moment later he had drawn a chair to the girl's side and was making himself agreeable to her with the tact of a well-bred man.

She must have known she was beautiful, and yet there was no trace of self-consciousness or affectation about her; the face lent her, in his mind, an added charm. Once, looking up suddenly, she flushed to find his eyes upon her face. He apologised quickly.

"You must think me an awful bore to stare at you so," he said. "Pray forgive me, Miss Winyard; I don't mean to be rude. The fact is I am a painter, and yours is just the type of face for a picture I have in my head. I would give ten pounds to find a model like you."

The conversation grew more personal after that, and unconsciously their voices dropped, so that they were practically *tête-à-tête* in a crowd.

She questioned him about his profession, and soon he found himself confiding to her more of his hopes and ambitions than a man usually confides to an acquaintance of half-an-hour.

When she rose at length to take leave of her hostess he shook hands with visible regret.

He was hard at work in his studio the next morning when a visiting-card, bearing her name, was brought to him.

His first sensation was pleasure, his second surprise. When she entered, and he noted that her lips were trembling with an embarrassment she could not conceal, his perplexity increased.

She gave him no time for conjecture anent her visit, but plunged into an explanation straightway.

"Mr. Moore," she said, with a nervous tremor in her voice, "I have come to ask you a favour. I dare say Lady Cameron has told you that we are very poor. My father is an invalid, and my brothers and sisters are young, so I am unable to leave home, although I am very anxious to earn a little money. Yesterday you said that you would give ten pounds to find a model like me. Mr. Moore, I am in urgent need of precisely that sum, so I have put false pride in my pocket, and come to ask you to let me be your model. If you did not mean what you said, and I can be of no use to you, don't mind telling me so. It is purely a business proposal that I put before you."

He spoke quickly, earnestly.

"I shall be delighted to paint you. I wish I could find words in which to thank you for offering me the chance. When would you give me a sitting? Would to-morrow, at eleven, suit you?"

"Oh, yes," she said; "all days are the same to me."

When she had gone he took up his brush again; but Mr. Moore's work for the rest of that morning was represented by three square inches of background, which he subsequently found cause to remove with a palette-knife.

He attributed his lack of appetite to overwork. Mr. Moore was mistaken; he was in love.

II.

The picture was nearly finished, and it was the best thing he had done. He knew it, and rejoiced as he lingered tenderly over the last touches.

"It's good," he told Helen. "I'm sure of it, though I say it who shouldn't. It would be strange, wouldn't it, if my chance meeting with you should prove a stepping-stone to success?"

She didn't reply, and he stifled a sigh as he bent lower over the canvas.

It was not the first time that her lack of responsiveness had chilled him. Of late she had shown no trace of the sympathy which had charmed him on the day of the introduction.

"She dislikes me," he thought bitterly, "and she wishes me to see that our intercourse must remain on a business footing. When the picture is finished she will go away and forget me, and I—I shall remember her all my days."

She was to come to the studio the next morning for the last time, and when she had left him, the consciousness of it oppressed his spirits with a leaden weight.

Returning homeward he found a crowd and a couple

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of fire-engines in the street where he lived, and a cry escaped him, for the fire was at the studios, and his picture—the best work of his life—was in jeopardy, if not destroyed.

A fire-escape was forthcoming, and as he gained the outskirts of the crowd, a cheer arose, and a woman was borne in safety to the ground. In the flickering flames he saw her face distinctly.

"Helen!" he gasped. "Good Heavens! Helen!"

In an instant he had forced a passage to her side and thrown his arms about her. She was very white, and her trembling limbs seemed glad of his support.

"I've saved the picture for you," she murmured. "I called to tell you that I couldn't come to-morrow, and I knew how much you valued it, so I ran up and let it down from the window."

"Confound the picture!" he cried fiercely. "All the canvases in creation wouldn't console me for a burn on your little finger."

His voice deepened almost to a sob.

"Oh, my darling, you risked your life for me, and I thought you didn't care!"

"And *I* thought that you were so devoted to your art that the woman was forgotten in the model."

"We've been making ourselves miserable for nothing," he said, "but, please Heaven, we'll make up for wasted time."

Their lips were very close together. But perhaps it was only the flickering light that made it seem as though they touched. B. S. K.

Told by the Marquise.

THE room blazed with light; the air was heavy with perfume; the orchestra, behind its screen of flowers, softly droned the minor strains of a stately minuet.

"No, Jean, my friend," returned the Marquise sadly, "discretion is not, as you say, silence only. True discretion is renunciation of self—self-sacrifice in every emergency, no matter how terrible, that carries it even, always unsuspected, to the point of heroism. Listen. I've a story to tell you.

"You have heard people talk of him—Colonel Robert de Gedres; of his tall form, his handsome face, his indomitable bravery, and unswerving loyalty——"

"And between whom and yourself, if I mistake not, Marquise," Jean interrupted, "there was a talk of marriage till that unfortunate duel between his brother and your cousin Rocheverte created an impassable barrier between the families?"

Madame de Logerolles hesitated a minute, then shrugged her shoulders lightly.

"You know that, then?" she said. "*Eh, bien*, it does not matter. The story, I continue it. It was summer, near Rouen, where Robert de Gedres, then commandant of one of the regiments of the Garde, was in garrison, and when the better portion of the city's inhabitants, flying from the heat of the town, sought relief and freshness in the many superb villas and mansions abounding in the environs.

"One of the handsomest of these properties belonged to a household that I shall designate, for convenience of recital, M. and Madame de Lucenay. They were not Rouenais people or yet Parisians, only M. de Lucenay was a rabid sportsman, and the vicinity of Rouen, at that time gorged with game of every description, had seemed to him the place of all others to instal himself each year from July to November.

"If it pleased M. de Lucenay to run the woods with its keepers and dogs, and watch over its boars, rabbits, and goats, it did not give the same pleasure to the lady who bore his name. She cared but little for *ragouts* and solitude, an *ennui* shared by the better part of her neighbours, who, forced to depend upon each other for company, ended by becoming almost as one community. All day long, united in one or another of the many houses, they killed time together, and spent their evenings in precisely the same way in all the traditional amusements of the country.

"Towards dinner time the husbands arrived from Rouen, bringing with them always a number of guests, whose strongest contingent was drawn from the circle of Rouen officers, among whom the most brilliant and popular was incontestably Robert de Gedres.

"One evening, after a little impromptu ball where he, the Colonel, had danced a great deal with Madame de Lucenay, and she, after bidding her guests adieu, had returned to her chamber to prepare for bed, she was as astonished and startled both when the door brusquely opened and her husband hurriedly entered, clad in shooting garb and gaiters, and with a fowling piece swung over his shoulder.

"'Two wolves, my dear,' said he, 'two wolves just reported that all summer long have been eating up my lambs and goats, and for which I and Renard here have to-night laid and baited a trap. Sleep well; don't worry or look for me before morning. I'm late as it is, you know.'

"And with a hasty kiss upon his wife's brow and a call to the garde, arrayed like his master, and hat in hand awaiting his pleasure, the door banged to again, and M. de Lucenay, all haste and excitement, was off on his wolf hunt.

"The heat was stifling. Madame de Lucenay threw off her ball dress, slipped into a loose white gown, and passed to the balcony to look at the night and breathe the air awhile before going to bed. No breath of breeze, however, stirred the leaves, motionless and sad, and no sound rose from the plain and wood below but the dull, droning hum of nocturnal insects.

"Still heated and excited from the exertion of the evening and disinclined to sleep, it occurred to Madame de Lucenay presently that a walk in the garden, in the midst of the flowers and the clear light of the moon, would perhaps refresh and soothe her overstrained nerves.

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"To reach the garden you traversed a broad conservatory opening directly into the *salle-à-manger*, itself separated from the *salon* by a wide arch draped with a heavy *portière*, and so arranged that when space demanded it, as on this evening, the three chambers could be thrown into one."

"*Peste!* What precision of detail! You know the house, then, Marquise?" Jean again interrupted with a slightly significant smile.

"Certainly," returned the Marquise, and resumed her story.

"Madame de Lucenay," said she, "opened the heavy iron-bound door of the greenhouse, and passed into the shadow of a broad alley of chestnut trees that led around the house and skirted the terrace in front of it.

"She had scarcely taken a dozen steps, however, when she stopped, trembling convulsively. A low, supplicating voice had called her name. She turned; Robert de Gedres stood before her.

"'You!' she cried stupefied, 'and at such an hour! What brings you here, then?'

"'To see you,' responded he passionately. 'Nay, do not cry out, Germaine; God is my witness that two hours ago I did not dream of doing what I am doing now. On leaving you I walked on at random through the country. Suddenly from a cross-path, I saw your husband passing in hunting garb and with his garde and dogs, and a mad idea seized me. I turned, came back, and climbed the wall of the garden, without knowing what I was doing, and for nothing in the world but to be near you one moment, to regard only the windows behind which you slept.

"'Then all at once, you yourself stood before me—you, the phantom of my shattered happiness; and you would bid me still be silent, still shut in the heart that beats only for you the secret that stifles it! I cannot! It is impossible! Speak I must, Germaine!'

"Madame de Lucenay, stupefied by Robert's appearance and his passionate avowal of a love that now, through circumstances beyond their control, it was a crime even to remember, much less to speak of, had, step by step, recoiled from him, till both of them stood inside the greenhouse door. Scarcely, too, had the words left his lips, when she feverishly seized his arm.

"'Hear, hear!' she said breathlessly, bending her ear to listen.

"Through the silence of the night the sand of the lower alley crunched under the firm, alert step of a man—a man walking leisurely, and whistling a hunting air.

"'My husband,' murmured she, in a strangled voice. 'Ah, madman that you are, Robert, you have ruined us both!'

"'No,' said he briefly. 'He will enter the *salon* steps. I still have time.'

"'Yes, yes, perhaps; but go—go quickly, I beseech you!' Madame de Lucenay returned wildly.

"And pushing him towards the still open conservatory door, she brusquely closed it upon him, and staggered back through the *salle-à-manger*. It was time. M. de Lucenay was entering the *salon*.

"Naturally, at the sight of his wife, all pale and trembling, too, he stopped astonished. She explained hastily as well as she could. She was so warm, and coming down for a little air, his step had startled her somewhat; nothing serious, it would soon pass.

"'But you, Armand—what means this speedy return?'

"'The fault of those cursed wolves,' said he; 'there was no drive at all; they were in the trap of their own accord when Renard and I arrived. We killed them at once, without a second shot even. But you were going for air, you say, dearest; come, take my arm. We'll go out together for a little while.'

"'Willingly——,' began his wife, then stopped short, and sank half swooning into a chair beside her.

"The moon, flashing suddenly from the clouds that covered it, had shown her plainly through the greenhouse door, an instant lighted up, the pale, anxious face of Robert de Gedres. One instant visible, the next moment lost in the night, as again the moon was veiled by the clouds.

"Behold what had happened.

"At the moment when Madame de Lucenay, terrified by the situation and the coming of her husband, pushed to the heavy, iron-bound door of the conservatory upon the Colonel, she had closed it so quickly and firmly that she had caught between it and the frame the index finger of M. de Gedres' right hand.

"At that moment M. de Lucenay entered the *salon*. In spite of his agony, Robert de Gedres had strength enough to restrain a cry, though suffering a torture that for a moment made it seem as if he must swoon outright. As soon as he could for the pain and faintness, he sought to extricate his hand and return as he had come.

"But, alas! a more cruel pang still warned him that he was not free to go; that the iron mountings of the door clung still by a strip of flesh to his broken finger and held him a prisoner.

"Again, at the same moment, the raised voice of M. de Lucenay, proposing to lead his wife to the garden, reached him through the glasses, and, by the dim light burning in the *salon* brackets, he saw him extend his arm and his wife rise to accept it.

"In one blinding flash all the consequences of his mad act were seared upon his brain, all the drama that was going to pass, the horrible scandal, the right to justice that the husband would demand for a fancied outrage; and this woman, this irreproachable wife, whom with all his soul he loved in spite of the barriers between them, would be ruined, scandalised, possibly killed through him, who would willingly have died to save her.

"To save her! Ah, a thought had struck him—he could, he would save her!

"Fumbling feverishly in his pocket he drew out his knife, opened it with his teeth, and with one swift, unhesitating cut, the crushed bone and flesh were through, and Robert de Gedres, the bleeding stump wrapped in his handkerchief, disappeared in the night.

"Next morning, at roll-call, instead of the Colonel, a messenger arrived from the doctor, bringing the intelligence that M. de Gedres had greviously wounded himself that morning cleaning his revolver, and had gone, by his orders, to recover from the accident, to his country seat of Loupe Solange."

* * * * * *

Madame de Logerolles stopped. Jean wiped his moist brow.

"Zounds, Marquise," cried he, drawing a long breath to relieve the tension of his feelings, "that's a creepy story of yours, but if, as you say, De Gedres was so discreet, how did you come to know so by the card all the peripatetics of this adventure?"

The Marquise stood up briskly and smilingly.

"Jean, my friend," said she, "the cotillon and my story both are ended. Profit by it; be discreet, ask no question; and, above all, in thy love affairs never let thy finger be caught by the door." Aubrey L'Orr.

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When the Birds Begin to Sing

By Winifred Graham. *Author of "Through the Valley," "Six First-Class Passengers," etc.*

SUMMARY.

Philip Roche marries Eleanor Grebby, daughter of a farmer, and they spend their honeymoon on the Continent. On their return to Richmond, Eleanor becomes friendly with a frivolous widow, Mrs. Mounteagle, against her husband's wishes. She is introduced to Carol Quinton, who fascinates her. Her husband is heart-broken, and consults his cousin, Erminie Henderson, who comes to stay with them. Eleanor's parents come to spend a day or two with her, and disgust Mrs. Monteagle with their homeliness. Nelson Lane and Erminie are engaged. Each is led to think the other rich, but the deceit is mutual. In order to right themselves in one another's eyes, they each, unknown to the other, speculate in mining shares.

CHAPTER XI.

Slow and Sure Comes up the Golden Year.

Eleanor's face is seared with weeping.

For the last three days Philip has hardly spoken to her.

She has stayed indoors and avoided Giddy, but now a message comes from the widow commenting on her non-appearance.

She pulls forward a sheet of paper, bites the end of her quill, and cries great drops of tears on the blotting-book. In a straggling hand she addresses an envelope to Mrs. Mounteagle, placing therein that unlucky letter from Madame Faustine.

In as few words as possible she relates the scene on paper to her friend.

"I am disheartened, dispirited, disevery thinged," she writes in conclusion. "As Dick in 'The Light that Failed' says: 'I am down and done for—broken—let me alone!'"

"Poor little wretch!" thinks Giddy, reading the sorrowful epistle. "I must tell Carol. He shall see this forlorn-looking scrawl." She sighs at the thought of some people's folly. "No sooner met, but they looked," she quotes to herself, *apropos* of Eleanor and Mr. Quinton. "No sooner looked, but they loved; no sooner loved, but they sighed. Ah! me, it's very natural, very plain!"

* * * * *

Erminie and Nelson Lane are returning from their honeymoon. They sought flight from their sorrows, but carried the burden of uneasy consciences throughout the tour.

Erminie has written to Philip to inform him of their return, and beg him to let her know if there is any rise in the "Klerksdorp" shares.

"Sometimes," she writes vaguely, "I have hunted in the papers to see them quoted, but never hit upon them. My anxiety is terrible. I begin to fear Nelson suspects I have something on my mind. He, too, has fits of depression, probably caused by my ill-concealed uneasiness."

"What is Erminie writing about?" asks Eleanor timidly, seeing Philip reading her letter.

"Only a business matter," he replies shortly, collapsing into silence.

"Is she back from her honeymoon?"

"They arrive to-night. You might go and see her to-morrow, Eleanor, for me, and take an important letter. Drive straight to Earl's Court and back; you can keep the carriage waiting." He speaks severely.

Eleanor agrees.

"I should like it very much. I have been so dull the last few days." But their latest quarrel is still so recent that Philip takes no notice of the remark.

Yet they are scarcely more wretched than the devoted couple who arrive that same evening in Trebovir Road, Earl's Court.

Notices her pallor, and kisses her.

The following morning Erminie looks longingly for a letter from Philip, and her heart sinks heavily as she runs her eyes over her correspondence.

Nelson notices her pallor, and kisses her tenderly.

"The journey has tired you darling," he says. "You should have breakfasted in bed."

"Oh, no!" she cries with a strained smile. "I feel quite bright and frisky, thank you. But, Nelson dear, you look horribly knocked up."

Her husband pulls himself together. "It is only coming back to chilly England after the sunny South. I feel rather nipped, that's all."

He is thinking of the bitter task before him, for this is the day he has planned to return from the city a ruined man. He is going to his stockbroker to learn if any company has come to utter grief during his absence, in the success of which he will declare his whole fortune was at stake.

The lie grates on him, galls him, tortures him, though as yet it has not been uttered.

He feels like a criminal unworthy to look his fellows in the face—a traitor to his wife—a scoundrel, a hypocrite!

"Yes, I am all of these," he inwardly declares, "and

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more!" The sting of self-contempt is burning into his soul. He kisses Erminie hurriedly, and rushes confused and ashamed from the house, to reap the whirlwind of bitterly repented deceit.

Mrs. Lane scarcely perceives his strange demeanour. She thinks he is not very well, but her own mind being harassed by tormenting doubts, she lets him go without a murmur. It is well to be alive when the brain is burning with fiery suspense.

She dares not go out, for any moment a telegram may come from Philip deciding her fate.

She paces the room, with racking head and tingling nerves. Surely her sin is repaid a thousand times by the wretchedness of these waiting hours.

She searches the morning papers with trembling fingers, but finds nothing. Tears blind her eyes. The news must be bad, or Philip would have let her know.

"What demon possessed me?" she cries, wringing her hands. "What devil prompted me to that one false step—that base deceit?"

She shudders at the recollection of the gradually sloping path which led to the deep abyss.

The bell rings.

"A telegram!" she thinks hopefully.

The door opens. Mrs. Roche is announced.

"*Mrs.*, not *Mr.*!" Again the misery of waiting floods her soul, for Eleanor knows nothing of the Klerksdorp Mine.

"Good-morning, dear," she falters. "It is kind of you to come and welcome me home."

Eleanor kisses her affectionately.

"Dearest Erminie," she sighs, "how happy you must be. I've thought of you so often since the wedding. I expect you had a lovely time."

"Oh, yes; but," looking at Eleanor's wistful little face, "are you in trouble dear?"

Mrs. Roche sinks upon the sofa, and gazes tragically into the fire.

"Yes. My home life is wretched. We don't get on at all, Philip and I."

There are tears in her voice as she speaks.

"And I will try to help you, dear."

"I suppose it is all my fault. I am fond of amusing myself, and once I deceived him in a little matter. He found me out, Erminie, and was *furious*. It has all been quite different since."

Erminie's sympathetic nature yearns to comfort her little friend. The word "deceived" awakes a fellow feeling. She forgets her own grievances, and gathering Eleanor in her arms, kisses away her rising tears.

"It is so nice to be petted again," sighs Mrs. Roche, holding Erminie's hands. "What a dear, soft thing you are. I wish I always had you to console me."

"I shall come and see Philip very soon, and try to make you friends again. I dare say he is sometimes a little hasty without meaning it."

"We were so happy when you and Mr. Lane stayed with us. But things began to go wrong directly you left. I believe you are my mascotte, Erminie. You see Philip is very jealous and suspicious, and there is a friend of mine whom he especially abhors."

"Then why allow him to be your friend?"

"Oh, because he is so nice, and I like him."

"Then *don't*," says Erminie decisively.

"But I can't help it. We cannot regulate these things. They are like the weather, utterly beyond our control. We have to put up with hatred or love. I sometimes wonder which is the worst evil. If a married woman is only to have her husband for her friend——"

"*And* lover," puts in Erminie, looking Eleanor straight in the eyes. "Ah!

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child, I see the root now of all these dissensions. You could kill it, dig it out, cast it from you, with an effort of strong will. It is so easy to be weak—so splendid to be strong! I am not one to preach, for I have sunk low enough."

"*You!*" gasps Eleanor.

"Yes. I gave way to conceits and follies. I stooped to deceive, and I am suffering, and must suffer, in consequence. There, dear, don't sympathise; it makes me feel lumpy here," pressing her throat. "The least said the soonest mended."

"It seems as if no one could really be happy," says Eleanor dolefully.

"Oh, indeed they can, if they are good. Only the frail ones must endure the consequences of their errors. That is why I want you to draw up in time, not to let a passing fascination wreck the happiness of your home."

"You mean I ought never to see this man again," compressing her lips, and forcing back her tears.

"Not if he brings misery upon you and upon Philip."

"Why are the wicked people so much the pleasantest, the nice things wrong, the sweets indigestible, and the nasty uninteresting porridge wholesome? I have seen so much of the 'porridge' of life—the deadly respectable, the limited propriety. Erminie, I am afraid I was born bad. I am one of those natures that fall, and cannot help themselves. Bah!" rising and staring down at her friend with frightened, bloodshot eyes. "It is those poisoned arrows again—the air is full of them. Do you know what I mean by poisoned arrows? They are the sins that stick into you, and leave their venom before you can wrench them out. They get through the chinks of your armour, though you think you have buckled it on ever so safely. Once they have stabbed your flesh you are never the same again—always sick and uneasy, fretful, reckless, dissatisfied. I have not got one, but a thousand. Oh, Erminie, what am I saying?"

She sinks on the hearthrug, buries her face in her hands, and sobs.

"You are excited and overwrought," says Erminie, raising her gently.

"It does me good to speak out to you," cries Eleanor, like a weary child.

"And I will try to help you, dear. Together we will cure those ugly wounds—fight the temptations, and lay them low. Whenever you have these feelings, just come and tell them to me. It is not so black and impossible as your poor little brain imagines. You will be a far better woman for having been put to the test and tried. I know you *can* conquer the arrows of sin, and it will widen your character, strengthen your virtues; for though there are dark shadows on the earth, its lights are stronger in the contrast."

"I like to hear you talk so," says Eleanor, smiling through her tears. "It gives me confidence. I believe I shall go back and do better. I feel quite fortified when you put your arms round me so lovingly, and tell me to be good. Oh, Erminie, don't let me go to the bad! I am so young yet."

The pitiful ring of sincerity in Eleanor's voice touches Erminie more deeply at this point.

She holds her tighter to her heart, whispering words of encouragement.

"I shall have to go and see your husband this afternoon on business in the City, unless I get a telegram from him," says Erminie, when Eleanor is calmed and happier.

"Oh! I forgot, dear," feeling in her pocket. "I have a letter from him for you. That is really why I came. Only I was so miserable I forgot all about it."

Erminie's heart stops beating as she takes the envelope. For a moment she dares not open the longed-for missive. What if its news is ill?

The room swims round as she breaks the seal. Her hands are trembling, her teeth chatter.

The words dance up and down before her eager vision.

DEAREST ERMINIE,—Let me congratulate you. Your shares in the Klerksdorp Mine have gone to 30s. apiece. What do you say to that?

Yours relievedly,
PHIL.

Erminie makes a quick calculation, the letter falls from

And skips around the room.

her hand with a cry of joy, she leaps to her feet, and skips around the room.

"What is the matter?" asks Eleanor wonderingly.

"Oh, nothing—nothing very much," she laughs exultantly. "Don't think me too horribly mercenary, but I've had such a stroke of luck it has nearly turned my brain. I put £2,000 in the Klerksdorp Estate Mining Company. I got 10,000 shares at four shillings each, and they have become worth £15,000."

"How lovely!" exclaims Mrs. Roche. "Oh, Erminie, I am so glad!"

"I can't believe it, I fear to wake and find it all a dream. You don't know what this money means to me, how I have prayed for it, longed for it, watched for it!"

"Really!"

Eleanor's tone of surprise brings Erminie back to her senses. They really are shattered for the moment with the joy of the shock.

"I ought not to have told you," she says.

"Why?"

"Because no one is to know, not even my husband."

"Don't you approve of speculations? Were you doing it under the rose?"

"Yes, that is it," laughs Erminie gaily. "I am so dreadfully goody-goody that I look on the Stock Exchange as a gambling den not to be encouraged. Now promise me, dear, on your word of honour, never to mention my Klerdsdorp spec. to Nelson."

"Of course I won't if you don't wish it, but the sight of your pleasure has put me in quite high spirits. I shall go on my way rejoicing."

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"And no more tears, mind!" says Erminie. "Won't you lunch with me?"

"No, thanks, dear. The carriage is waiting, and I did not intend to stay so long."

"Come and see me very often, whenever you feel inclined for a little lecture and a little love. I shall always understand!"

As Eleanor drives away, Erminie rushes out and buys an armful of flowers to decorate the house for Nelson's return, sends an ecstatic wire of gratitude to Philip Roche, and gives the crossing-sweeper half-a-crown.

In the meanwhile, her husband is with his stockbroker, talking casually about shares, with the object of discovering a reason for his ruin.

"How have things been lately?" he asks vaguely "Any big venture gone smash since my absence?"

"No; everything has flown up like wildfire. Never knew such times. We have all been making our fortunes."

Nelson sighs.

"I wish I had."

"Take for instance," continued his broker, "the Golden Link Mine—look at that! Why, those shares——"

"Eh! What?" asks Nelson, sitting bolt upright, and staring at the man before him. "Did you say the Golden Link Mine?"

"Yes, those shares were bought by some people for 2s. 6d. Only think of it—half-a-crown apiece!"

He shrugs his shoulders at the recollection, but does not see the nervous excitement suddenly paralysing Nelson Lane.

"What are they now?" he asks, when he has breath enough to speak.

"Eh! What?" asks Nelson.

"Why, £5 a share! It is positively sickening. And I might have been in it!"

During moments of great excitement Nelson turns to stone. He cannot show his inward joy by the outward signs of other men. He has one of those peculiar natures that reserve the best things for their own appreciation, never flaunting them before the world.

His very soul surges with untold delight, his spirits leap within him, his head swims.

Then he rises from his chair, saying in his most ordinary tones:

"Really! That is good hearing. I shall have made £40,000."

* * * * * *

Erminie hears his light step in the hall.

"Darling, has the day seemed long?" he cries, clasping her to his heart.

His eyes are intensely bright, his lips smile.

Erminie laughs merrily.

"How well you look!" she says.

"I thought you would like to go out to-night, dearest," he replies, "so I bought a box at the Lyceum."

"How delightful of you! The same idea struck me, and I took two stalls for the Gaiety."

"Never mind, we'll do both, the first act of a heavy tragedy, and wind up with a chorus, and dancing, and jollity."

* * * * *

"Nelson will never know," thinks Erminie gratefully. "Oh, how much I have to be thankful for!"

As she prays on her knees that night her prayers are all thanksgiving for the good fortune that has been hers.

* * *

"Thank Heaven I can look my wife in the face and feel that she will never suspect, never know!" sighs Nelson, as he, too, murmurs a heartfelt prayer in the silence of his soul.

CHAPTER XII.

If we only knew! If we only knew!

Eleanor is not going out this afternoon, though the air is mild, the sun shines, and all the world smiles.

She has more than one call to return, which should have been done to-day, yet she sits alone in her pretty boudoir, neither reading, working, nor writing.

Her expression renders her face even more beautiful than usual in the subdued light. For a ray of winter sunshine, heralding the spring, has quite dazzled Eleanor's eyes, till she draws the blind, and settles in a cosy corner at the side of the fender.

In her hand is a letter, brief, yet to its owner teeming with news, so significant the simple wording seems.

"Why this silence? Stay at home to-day. *I must* see you."

It is neither commenced nor signed, but written in Carol Quinton's familiar hand.

Surely there is something imperative about that "Stay at home to-day." No "please," or "will you?". Merely the bare command. True the *must* is underlined, and the question savours of anxiety as to her reticence in writing or meeting him again.

Well, he shall come, since this is to be the end.

Better face the matter out; it is dangerous dodging poisoned arrows. She will try how her shield works, that is to glance them aside.

Determination is in her heart, and courage in her eye. Erminie's words still ring in her soul. "It is so easy to be

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weak, so splendid to be strong!" Eleanor is worked up into a fever of virtuous indignation at the remembrance of all she has allowed Quinton to do and say in the past. This is to be the turning point in her life. She will be loyal to her husband, and her first pure love, she will show him that she is capable of sacrifice, a woman to be trusted, looked up to, reverenced. Carol Quinton shall never enter her doors again after this call, never see her, hear from her, speak to her. She will fade from his life, as a shadow, a phantom! The sting of sorrow, the bitterness of thus casting a love she treasured to the wind, is subdued in a measure by a sense of exhilaration, at the thought of her good resolve.

Already "virtue's own reward" seems in her grasp, her heart is lighter, her spirit does not quail. She is tasting perhaps a shred of the martyr's joy, when they suffered in the cause of right, she is battling down that weaker nature and gaining a victory in advance.

She is impatient for the moment to arrive when Carol shall stand before her to learn his fate, his isolation, from her lips. No pity, no glimpse of feeling, no suspicion of sentiment is to creep into this day's farewell. He will leave her for ever with the ordinary hand-shake of a casual acquaintance. Yes, she is nerved, strong, sure!

It has taken Eleanor three nights of sleepless vigil to overcome her love and stamp it out. She has not reached this point without a struggle.

She listens eagerly for him to come, longing for the interview to commence and end, while a spirit of heroism is upon her, laying her lower nature in the dust.

"Down! you shall never rise again," she cries. "Oh! why is he so long? I want him *now*. I could do it *now*. After to-day I shall have swept the temptation from my path, and made it impossible for Carol Quinton to be my friend."

The bell rings—the outer bell. She staggers to her feet.

The brown chrysanthemum in her belt falls to the ground and lies unheeded.

How she trembles! Her face, too, is deadly pale, revealed in the mirror opposite. She sways like a flower blown in a gale. There is a prayer on her lips, an angel knocking at her heart.

The door opens, and Sarah enters with the tea-tray.

Eleanor sinks on the sofa, the reaction leaving her faint and powerless to speak.

She watches the tea-table brought forward, the hot scones placed by the fire.

At last she regains her composure.

"Who was that at the front door, Sarah?"

"Mr. Quinton, ma'am."

"Mr. Quinton! Why did you not show him in?".

Eleanor leans forward breathlessly, looking Sarah up and down.

The maid crimsons, and replies:

"If you please, it was master's orders. He told me to say 'not at home' when Mr. Quinton called."

A moment's pause, during which Mrs. Roche struggles with her self-control.

Then in a calm voice she says:

"Very well, Sarah; that is all."

She raises the teapot with an effort, pouring out the brown fluid jerkily.

As the door closes, she covers her face with her hands, rocking to and fro.

"He does not trust me," she cries fiercely, all that is evil kindling to life within her. "He slights and insults me, lowers me before my own servants. He dares to shut his doors against my will, to the man who is my friend. He treats me like a captive, a slave. Oh! Philip, you do not know what you have done to-day? You do not guess how much this want of faith may cost you.

"I was so strong, till you threw me back, so sure, till you treated me like this!"

Eleanor realises how the shock of Philip's order has been the death-blow to her good resolves. A sudden hatred of her husband leaps in to her heart and brain, choking her.

She feels like a hunted stag.

"A little confidence, a little love," she murmurs. "They are small things to ask at Philip's hands, yet he holds them from me in his cold reserve and suspicious dread."

Her eyes are dry and bright, her throat is parched, her forehead burns.

What will Carol think? Carol will be sorry, but not angry, Carol is always kind, considerate, forgiving. The dangerous fascination of imagination steals over her. Carol is at her side in a waking dream, but the scene is very different to the one she had contemplated. She fancies he is kneeling as once before by the same sofa, murmuring again those wild, impassioned words. She bends to grasp his hands and raise him from the grovelling adoration to her own level. They are just a man and woman—soul to soul, clay; ah! yes, of the earth earthly.

She breaks into a low laugh which ripples round the room, and seems to die away in something like a sob.

What is this rising tumult in her heart?

She cannot analyse her mood, it seems as if a certain knowledge has broken in like a flood of light upon her dim reason.

"Who can prevent me loving him, who can hold me back if I will it, if I choose?"

The door re-opens. Sarah enters with one of Mrs. Mounteagle's little scented notes upon a salver.

DEAREST ELEANOR,—If you are in, just toddle round to tea like a darling. I have some delicious toasted buns, and I want you to come and eat them. Don't put on gloves.

Your all impatient,
GIDDY.

It is intolerable sitting in alone, fuming over her wrongs

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and acting a drama with her imagination. Philip detests Giddy. She will pay him out and go.

Glad of anything to divert the current of her thoughts, she snatches up a small fur cap in the hall, which rests becomingly on Eleanor's wealth of waving hair. Flinging a long red cloak around her, she slips out of the house, and rings at the widow's door.

"I hope she is alone. I don't feel in the mood to compass Bertie's inane conversation," thinks Mrs. Roche as the flaxen maid shows her in.

The twilight has gathered, but there is no lamp, as Giddy rustles forward in a lavender tea-gown to greet Eleanor.

"You are a very bad child," she says, holding up her finger, "but we've found you out, and shown you up most shockingly. What right have you to break hearts, as if they were only *bric-à-brac*, and say 'Not at home' when you were probably gourmandising over that huge Buzzard cake we ordered in town?"

Eleanor cannot speak, for Carol Quinton rises, and looks reproachfully into her eyes. She feels like a hunted stag, and yet she is glad—relieved.

"There! now you are in a hole," continues Giddy, laughing, "with no time to invent a plausible excuse. But come and sit down and ask forgiveness. I dare say Carol will get over it."

As yet Eleanor has not spoken. She walks like one in a trance to the quaint old chair.

Mrs. Mounteagle draws forward. She sits down mechanically and gazes at the colours in the carpet, just as she did once before at the Butterflies' Club.

"What a poor little world it is!" she thinks; "just like a muddy, narrow lane, through which its puppets drive or run, with the dirt thrown up in their faces at every turn."

"Come! do not look so glum over it," coos Giddy, removing Eleanor's cloak. "Carol knows as well as I do what a row you have been in, and how rusty Mr. Roche has turned. We are both most terribly sorry for you. I am sure I don't know how you stand him. It does so remind me of my late husband, from whom I was separated by mutual agreement two years before his death. Our quarrels began much in the same way.

"I preferred a will of my own, and meant to have it. He would have treated me like the chickens cooped up in the yard—a useful addition to his table, only their part was the most enviable. I should not have minded being cooked and roasted, for there my sorrows would have ceased."

"Death must be very pleasant," says Eleanor slowly, her head turning lightly to the alluring charms of suicide.

"No doubt, when you are old and ugly. But at present life is what you have got to consider, my dear."

"Life and buttered buns," replies Eleanor drily, as Mrs. Mounteagle hands the dish. "No, thank you, Giddy. I don't want any tea."

Her voice trembles with agitation, as Carol, who has never taken his eyes off her, draws a little nearer.

"If you won't eat anything, dear," murmurs Giddy, "at least you must drink something just to settle your nerves. Suction is so much more romantic than mastication."

But Eleanor shakes her head.

"I am going to play peacemaker," declares Mrs. Mounteagle, "and leave you two to make it up. I have an important letter to write, which must catch the half-past five post. You owe Carol an apology, and that is always difficult in the presence of a third party."

Eleanor is about to demur, when she catches Mr. Quinton's expression, and his look withers the words on her tongue, and forces them back.

She only stammers: "Don't be long," and collapses into silence.

Giddy's important letter is addressed to the Fur Store. She orders the muff.

* * * * * * *

If things have been going badly at "Lyndhurst" before the day on which Philip makes his fatal error, they do not bear comparison with the bad times that follow.

Even Erminie's sweet influence cannot bring peace to the ill-conditioned home. True she does her best, coming frequently, and spending long days in Eleanor's society. But though Mrs. Roche entertains her charmingly, she refuses to discuss Philip, and flees from good advice with the clever tact that can conceal rudeness and yet repel in a breath.

Philip turns away and wipes his brow.

"I don't know why," says Philip one day, in confidence to Erminie, "but though I do all in my power to win back my wife's love, it seems I have lost it for ever."

Erminie knows the reason, and so does he, only he dares not own it.

"She has tried me a good deal at times," he continues, "yet I love her just as madly, and that is what makes me seem to her fiendishly cruel occasionally, when the spirit of jealousy robs me of reason. I can't bear it, Erminie, to see her restless and dissatisfied in my presence, to feel her shudder from my kiss. An insurmountable barrier is rising between us. Can you guess what it is?"

"Yes."

Erminie's answer startles Philip.

"Then you, too, have noticed—all the world sees it? That man who is trying to steal my wife from me is the curse, the foul fiend, the shadow, the shame. I met him in the City only yesterday. He tried to bow, but I looked him in the face and cut him dead. He paled and shrank away."

"Then, perhaps," suggests Erminie hopefully, "Eleanor has broken with him?"

"Not so long as she is in Giddy Mounteagle's clutches. For a while I let my business alone, I stayed at home day after day to guard and watch her. She divined

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the reason, and chafed against her cage, like a bird bereft of song, whose wings are cut. Things went badly for me on the Stock Exchange; I found I was losing hundreds, thousands, through my absence. Finally I returned, and Eleanor's face grew brighter—*she had seen him again!*"

"How do you know?"

"Don't ask me."

Philip turns away and wipes his brow. Erminie's true heart bleeds for him as she thinks of the perfect sympathy and confidence reigning between herself and Nelson.

"Your cloud may lift in time," she says, somewhat lamely seeking to console him.

"It may deepen," he answers lugubriously.

"Supposing you were able to persuade Eleanor to go home for a visit; it would be pleasant at Copthorne now the spring has come. Her parents are good, honest people, the country life a healthy one. It might strengthen her in body and mind, awaking memories of youth and innocence, your courtship, her marriage! There is no tonic for a diseased mind like fresh air and green fields. She said she longed to see the dear old farm again only yesterday. It would put her beyond the reach of Giddy Mounteagle, and you might run up and down several times in the week."

"I will suggest it," says Philip.

The idea delights Mrs. Roche beyond measure when later on her husband mentions it. She has frequently met Carol Quinton of late, and the ardour of his passion, and her own over-powering love, have frightened her at last.

The thought of escaping to the country to seek forgetfulness and avoid temptation appeals to her.

She puts her arms softly and half timidly round Philip's neck, resting her cheek against his, as she has not done for weeks.

He snatches her to his heart with a cry, smothering her face in kisses. "Eleanor, can't we be better friends?" he whispers.

The tears course down her cheeks, the guilty love she is trying to crush rises before her—jeering, taunting.

"I will try, Philip," she falters. "Only let me go home for a while, and see the old scenes, the familiar faces."

He still holds her to him, his pulses thrilling at her softened tone, as he answers: "Yes."

"I am really going back to the farm, Giddy," she says the following day, "to vegetate, and grow young again among the primroses and violets. The lawn will be yellow with crocus flowers, and I can almost smell the hyacinths. I promised them faithfully I would return, when the birds began to sing!"

"Can't we be better friends?"

"You must give me your address," says Giddy. "I should like to write."

Eleanor looks at her shrewdly.

She has never quite forgotten the "Lady MacDonald" or "the party" episode. It is the recollection of this that makes her state, with a certain pride, the pleasure she feels in visiting her people.

"I will give it you on one condition," she replies.

"And that?"

"Promise me faithfully on no account to pass it on to Carol Quinton."

"Why not?"

"Because I have gone too far, Giddy. I want to get away from his influence. You know he dogs my footsteps, tracks, and haunts me. I dare not trust myself. I am going away for a course of discipline, simple living, and country pursuits. I know if you promise, I can trust you."

She holds out a paper on which her address is written, but keeps her palm over the letter till Giddy shall make the promise.

"I swear," says Mrs. Mounteagle.

(To be continued.)

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A BITTER REVENGE.

Peradventure I was wrong. Wiser men than I have gone astray over a subject far less intricate than a woman. Maybe it was a pang of jealousy that shot through my already wavering heart and turned the admiration I had hitherto held for her into curiosity not unmixed with hatred. And that jealousy was not without good and sufficient basis.

From the time that she joined our company Ira Cleon was the idol of both men and women. All the men worshipped her, and all the women admired her.

I say all the men, but it was not so. There was one who prided himself on his ability to read the woman off on sight; who discovered, or imagined he discovered, traits in her character that were hidden from the rude gaze of the world; who more than once, by the careful wielding of the power he possessed, succeeded in bringing forcibly before the unhappy woman her inmost thoughts and wishes, laying them bare in the air which surrounded her. I was that person.

Ira Cleon appeared amongst us when *The Feud* was about to be produced for the first time at Norman's Theatre. She came as leading lady. Our manager had picked her up in America, but she was not an American. She spoke several languages, but no one knew her history.

She was very beautiful, and I cannot do justice to a description of her. Yet with my blunt pen and dull wit I will make the attempt.

Her eyes were large, blue, and overhung with long, silky lashes; her soft cheeks were tinged with the rosiest red; the full, rich lips, the pearly teeth, the short curly hair, the white dimpled arms, the form of suppleness and grace—combine the whole with a strange union of masculine force and womanly sweetness, and you may be able to catch a glimpse of our lady through the misty and all too clumsy veil of prosaicness that I in my incapacity have drawn around her beauty.

Thus, in such a form she is as near perfection as mortal woman could hope to be.

But listen to her talking, watch her stride, note the vile cigarette between those dainty lips, and hear in amazement the coarse jests that emanate from the small clouds of smoke that rise around her curly head.

Then you will, perhaps, get an insight into the character of this fair lady.

She rises from the box on which she has been sitting—carelessly, legs crossed—and strides over to the manager anxiously scanning a roll of manuscript. She claps him on the back with a loud "Ha! Ha!" that makes him start. It amuses her, but the reprimand that is on his lips is dispelled in a moment, for he knows full well she can give him back all that he is worth.

Again, she passes on to an actor, a pale-faced, black haired youth, madly in love with her, whose obsequious courtesies she repudiates with scorn. Sometimes, however, she smilingly encourages him, raising his hopes to ecstatic bliss, then, out of mere wantonness and pleasure at seeing him suffer, dashes him down to grovel at her feet, by an expression of displeasure, or the shadow of a frown.

She is in a playful mood to-night, and the sickly boy rejoices at her winning smiles, hoping against hope they are meant for him, and him alone.

"Ah, poor Turmole!" she cried nonchalantly, flinging aside the stump of her cigarette, and preparing a fresh weed. "You seem in good spirits to-night. Not quite so confoundedly groggy." And she laughs gaily as the gas jet, at which she obtains a light, radiates on the cruel, lovely face.

"'Tis but natural," comes the reply, with a dramatic flourish of the thin, white hand, "that I should feel the glamour of your presence, even as the world looks bright and cheerful beneath the warm and fruitful rays of King Sol."

"Then it's comforting to know I have a different effect upon you to what the moon has," she replies with a slight dash of sarcasm, moving towards her next victim.

"Oh, pray, you misunderstand me," gasped the love-sick one, stretching out his hands supplicatingly after her in vain. He sinks back dejected, miserable, realising in its intensity the bitter fact that this woman he adores despises him.

And so she passes from one to another, treating them in much the same way, knowing all the time what pain and anguish she is causing the love-sick fools, and revelling in her heartlessness.

She loved her profession; her whole heart was on the boards. She may have been good at the bottom; sometimes I almost fancy she was, and that I was too harsh in criticising her little excesses. More than once she told me I had no right to do so as a fellow actor.

"Let Society be my judge," were her words; and Society went mad over her, though beyond its kindly criticisms she cared nothing for Society.

She always assumed male *rôles* and few were able to

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bring out so fully and powerfully the features that characterise the stage hero.

There came a time, some months after she appeared amongst us, when the piece, which had met with a most successful run, was to be supplanted by another of an equally thrilling nature, the cast of which meant the addition of another member to the company.

This person took the form of a man named Ralph Masser, a tall, splendidly built fellow, with a forcible and determined cast of countenance.

I shall never forget the night of the first rehearsal. How we all watched every movement of that lithe and muscular body, listened to the sound of that rich, deep voice, and applauded with genuine admiration as he stepped to the back of the stage at the conclusion.

I was near Ira as he finished, and she just clasped her hands in rapture, while a soft "bravo!" escaped her lips. Somehow or other I could not keep my eyes off her face, and I noticed that as she caught sight of him when he turned towards us a deathly pallor overspread the features, while a gasp of amazement and terror issued from the white lips. It was soon over. But I am an observant man, and my suspicions were aroused. She must have known him before.

On one occasion I told her so. But she strenuously denied it. Then I became so positive that she admitted the truth of my assertion.

It so happened that Ira and the newcomer shared the honours of the celebrated duel scene in the new play. And she never acted so well as when with him, treating him with marked familiarity.

I watched them narrowly. No one else did; no one else had any reason for doing so. I had. True, every male actor in our company was madly jealous, but, after a time, resigned himself to fate, and gave up all hope of ever winning that love so palpably offered to another.

If tender actions may be taken as a sign of tender feelings in these matters, little doubt could be entertained as to whether or not the two loved.

He was ever by her side, whispering soft words to her willing ears, driving her to and from the theatre, championing her cause in her absence. She, too, laughed less often when he was near, never gave way to coarse jokes, accepted the little favours from him that she had refused of others, and flushed slightly at his approach. These signs all came under my notice, and I had many opportunities of observing them.

Still, there seemed to me to be an occult something existing between them. They had reached a point in their love beyond which it appeared impossible to extend.

Once, at a morning rehearsal, I chanced to stumble unobserved into the green-room. There they sat, together, on a lounge, her head resting on his shoulder. She was speaking, and as I turned to go, the words:

"My love, my only love!" fell upon my startled ears.

Then, as days went by, her smile came less often, and the eyes became encircled with dark rings, her step was less sprightly than of old, while sometimes she became dazed and bewildered, losing all control of her movements and the thread of her discourse.

The manager saw and noted all these developments for the worse in her disposition, and said that she studied too hard. No one could in common fairness gainsay that. She had worked hard ever since we had known her, and certainly a change would do her good.

Rather than lose permanently so valuable a member of his company, he decided to finish up the run and send her off to America for a time with Masser. To this both agreed.

On the last night I was standing in the wings, awaiting my cue, when I heard them approaching. She was staggering slightly, with pale face and quivering body. He was supporting her. Some strange incident had taken place between them, of that I felt certain. When they got quite close to me she was better, though very white.

Ira went on first, and I had never seen her look more beautiful. The house fairly shook with rolls of applause, which burst out afresh as he entered from the opposite side.

With a small peaked cap set jauntily on the mass of golden curls, a light blue cloak hanging caressingly over her shoulders, and her shapely limbs encased in a pair of white breeches and top boots, our leading lady represented to perfection a champion of the age of chivalry.

By her side hung a small sword—a mere plaything—bright, glistening, and harmless. This she drew at the conclusion of a blusteringly delivered speech, and swung round her head, crying to the ruffian who stood before her:

"Defend yourself!"

With a well-practised, swift movement, his rapier leapt from its sheath, and steel clashed with steel.

How the people applauded! They were splendidly matched, these two, his six feet scarcely lifting him above her plume-covered cap.

At last, as in all such battles, the hero, by a dextrous movement, sent his opponent's sword springing across the greensward.

"Enough!" she cried, holding her weapon aloft, then flinging it away with a gesture of contempt.

She approached him, and, as a hundred times before she had done, would have clasped his hand. But at that point she hesitated. A thrill seemed to pass over the delicate frame. The whole theatre was hushed in silence. A white hand was ungloved and thrust beneath the light blue cloak. Another second, and Masser lay unconscious on the stage, while a thin, blue smoke curled unnoticed up and up till it vanished in air.

* * * * *

Masser was not mortally wounded; he recovered from the effects of his wound, and left the country before Ira came back to health and strength.

It was all explained a few months afterwards.

She was a Corsican, and had sworn to avenge her brother's death. Such was the issue in the battle between love and duty.

Masser had known her motive all the time; had known that she would attempt his life, sooner or later. And the strangest part of the whole thing was his connivance at it.

F. J. L.

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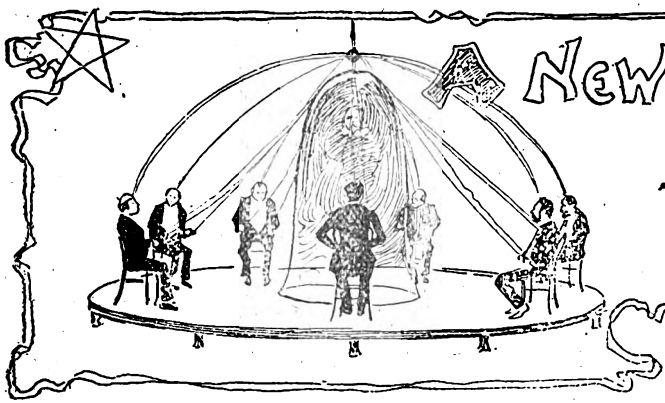
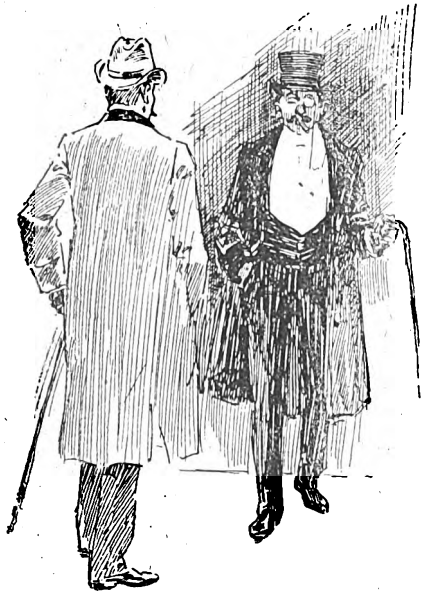


New Theosophy.

The Recent Startling Manifestations of the Pentagram Club.

I have frequently had occasion to visit a certain new and commodious building in Market Street, many of the chambers of which are yet untenanted, and as my business took me to a somewhat remote quarter of the building, I had sometimes, when the lift was not running, to pass along not a few of the lengthy corridors on my way to my destination. There was one door which always piqued my curiosity as I passed it. Instead of having the name and business of the tenant emblazoned on the panelling as is usually the custom, this particular door had upon it nothing but a plain, silver star.

I do not know why it should have been so, but my curiosity was nettled. What did it matter to me, I asked myself, who composed any of the many clubs, social, political, or otherwise, with which the city abounds? Perhaps the star upon the door had something to do with it, for it had not escaped my attention



Face to face with a well-known member of the Union Club.

that this star was of the five-pointed variety; it was, in short, neither more nor less than the mystic pentagram, which has, from the earliest times, been associated with all that is esoteric and occult. Be this as it may, I mentally resolved to fathom the mystery, if mystery there was, for there was nothing to indicate anything of the kind as yet, and accordingly I went systematically about it.

I had, as I have said, never seen anyone going in or out of the apartments in question. But my business in the building had always called for my presence in the daytime, or early evening—never at night. The logical inference to be drawn from this was, that I should be more likely to get the desired information by being in the neighbourhood of the apartments in question at night.

I accordingly put this idea into practice, and for several nights—three, as a matter of fact—I arrived at the main entrance of the building about eight o'clock, ascended to the fourth floor, and sauntered leisurely about the deserted corridor, always, however, keeping in mind the object I had in view.

On the third night I got tired of my unfruitful vigil. I looked at my watch—it was a quarter past eleven—and then walked briskly down the corridor towards the main staircase. I had hardly reached it when I heard footsteps on the stairs, and, as I reached them, found myself face to face with a well-known member of the Union Club, in evening dress and overcoat, smoking a cigar. The light from the street was strong enough for me to recognise objects which would have been too obscure for recognition had not my eyes been rendered supersensitive by their long watch in the darkness.

As it was, the gentleman in question did not recognise me, or if he did, made no sign of recognition, though our acquaintanceship was one of no recent date. I felt, however, that explanations were not in order at the moment, and though I could not help connecting his presence with the club-rooms that had grown so mysterious in my eyes, I recollected the old adage, *noblesse oblige* and with a feeling somewhat more akin to shame than I had yet experienced in my self-instituted investigations, passed hurriedly on and descended the stairs.

Before I had reached the second storey I met another clubman—a well-known broker and member of the Ocean Club—dressed in evening costume, like the other, swinging his stick jauntily, and humming an operatic air as he tripped lightly up. He, too, took no notice of my presence, if indeed he saw me.

By this time I had come to the conclusion: First, that the apartments I had been regarding with so much mystery and suspicion were certainly the meeting-rooms of a club; secondly, that this club had been organised by a select coterie of well-to-do and reputable gentlemen

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for purposes of their own enjoyment; and, thirdly, that I had been wasting my time in a wild-goose chase towards the mystic and the occult, and had found instead a resort of a few gentlemen of leisure and fashion, who had no doubt selected these quarters as a quiet retreat from the conventionality and boredom with which they were afflicted at the more open and populous clubs.

In less than a minute I had reached the entrance, and was standing there looking and waiting for my particular 'bus, when another gentleman came along, and turned into the doorway. He, too, was well-known to me as one of the deepest thinkers and most laborious workers in his own special department of science that this portion of the world, or, for that matter, the world generally, boasts. Should I connect him, too, with an association arranged for mere purposes of relaxation and pleasure, such as I could well imagine the two gentlemen who had preceded him would have been in their element in? But then—*dulce est desipere in loco*—and, perhaps, who knows, Professor P—— was no exception to the time-honoured rule.

But this was not yet the termination of my ponderings. During the next four or five minutes in which I waited for one of those late 'buses, which give the amplest possible latitude to the laggard, three more gentlemen brushed past me, each by himself; one, a lawyer of unquestioned abilities, but somewhat questionable reputation; another, a divine whose reputation is as unquestioned as his attainments are varied and profound; and a third, who was unknown to me, but whose cultured face, thoughtful expression, and dignified bearing, at once convinced me that he was no common man, whatever the department of life he had selected or filled.

"And now I will tell you something about our aims and objects."

Scarcely ten seconds after the last arrival had passed in, who, of course, I could not help associating with those who had preceded him, as the hour precluded the idea of anyone having any special business of his own in the almost untenanted and deserted building, and the closeness of the arrivals arguing evident design, I caught sight of my friend, Dr. W——, who also turned in at the entrance. After we had shaken hands cordially, I made the remark:

"Doctor, do you belong to that club upstairs?"

"What club?" he asked, taken aback, as I could see, by the directness of the question.

"Why, that club containing such men as——" here I mentioned the names of the gentlemen who had passed by me on my way down the stairs and while I was standing at the door.

"Ah! then you know something about our club?" returned the Doctor musingly; "I should hardly have thought it possible, we are so recently organised, and—well, yes—our proceedings are kept so strictly private."

"On the contrary, I know nothing about it," I replied: "I merely conjectured from some circumstances that have come under my notice, and from the half-a-dozen gentlemen who have just gone upstairs, that there was a club in those rooms with the star on the door, and I thought I would ask you about it. Pardon me if I am too inquisitive. It is a matter of principle with me, as you know, to get as much information as I can about everything that is going on."

"Well," said the Doctor thoughtfully, "come to my office to-morrow, and I think I can tell you something that will make you open your eyes. And now you must excuse me, as I am already late," and he hastened upstairs after the others.

On my way home I kept wondering what sort of a club that could be which contained such seemingly heterogeneous elements as those I have described. What could such men as I had seen, supposing them to be fair samples of the general composition of the society, have in common? It was anomalous to say the least, and the following afternoon found me at Dr. W.'s office, at an hour when I knew he was at leisure, eager for an explanation.

"Yes," assented the Doctor, after we were seated, and I had referred to the anomaly which struck me as curious, "it does seem somewhat strange that men so different in tastes and aspirations should come together for any purpose whatever. And now I will tell you something about our aims and objects. Mind," he went on, somewhat more impressively than was his usual custom when speaking to me, "you may consider yourself specially favoured by the disclosures I am going to make, as we had not quite made up our minds that the time had come to make the matter public—for public, of course, it will now be made."

"Not necessarily," I remarked; "that is a matter that must be left entirely to yourself."

"Well, we eventually decided that it would be best to publish to the world a statement of fact, suppressing, however, for the present, all names. You know what the public is. It is always ready to set down anyone who sees or acts beyond its comprehension, or above its plane, as a fool or lunatic. We cannot change, and do not care to face, for the present, its adverse criticism."

I cordially agreed, and the Doctor went on:

"Our society, or club—we call it 'The Pentagram

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Club,' perhaps you noticed the symbol on the door—originated about a month ago, and in a somewhat peculiar manner. Somewhat before that time a gentleman arrived from Vienna, whose name, famous as it is in the scientific world—you know it well, and, for all I know, may know himself—at once made him the recipient of marked attention from our leading people. He was, of course, introduced at all of our principal clubs, and speedily became the centre of a coterie of such of their members as pretended to anything in the shape of scientific tastes.

"It soon transpired that Professor C——, while the department of science in which he has attained pre-eminent distinction is of an eminently practical nature, was, nevertheless, a deep and enthusiastic student of that esoteric branch of science which has been termed theosophy. Many of our club men became interested in the subject through the masterly and graphic way in which the Professor treated it, and many were the discussions and conversations held by the little knot of interested listeners in private rooms, representing almost every walk in life, I myself being no infrequent attendant.

"One afternoon, about a month ago—the sixteenth or seventeenth of May, I think it was—one of these little knots was gathered round Professor C——'s chair in one of the rooms of the Union Club, two of them—Professor P—— and the Rev. Mr. M——, whom you saw yesterday night ascending the stairs leading to our club-rooms—attracted by an earnest desire for information upon the subject-matter discussed; to others—Judge S—— and myself—attracted, I think, rather by the intellectual gratification afforded by listening to a flow of eloquent language and polished diction, no matter what the topic may be; and two others—the broker and the club man whom you say you met first upon the stairs—having strolled in and joined the group, perhaps to kill time, perhaps out of mere curiosity, for they themselves would be the last to lay claim to any special intellectual or scientific aspirations.

"Professor C—— had been expatiating upon the differences between ancient and modern theosophy, a subject on which, I assure you, I am yet woefully ignorant, and for which, to tell the truth, I have not much predilection, when he suddenly broke off from the thread of his discourse, which had really been addressed to the representative of science and theology, in the persons of Professor P—— and the Rev. Mr. M——, the other four of us having drifted in, and become members of the group from motives I have already suggested, and addressed us all collectively:

"'Gentlemen,' he said, as near as I can recall his language, the manner of which was particularly grave and impressive, 'I am about to make what may seem a peculiar, not to say startling, proposition. I am led to believe from some facts I have noted, and experiments I have made within the last day or two, that I am on the eve of making the most important discovery in regard to the true relations existing between what we are pleased to call, in default of a better term, the spiritual and the material world, a discovery which, if it results, as I doubt not it will, in success, will set speculation at rest for ever regarding these relations, and supply the key that will unlock all the secrets of the unknown. Gentlemen, will you assist me in making a great, a grand experiment, and share with me the honour of a discovery which will make your names illustrious and honoured for all time?'

"None of us could fail to be impressed by the earnestness, sincerity, and dignity of Professor C——'s language, but neither did any of us, as I could see, realise what was required of us, a point which the Professor was not slow to appreciate, and he proceeded:

"'What I have to propose, practically, gentlemen, is this: We, now sitting here, number seven persons in all; we symbolise the mystic number seven. Nay, we do more. I think I am not mistaken in saying—for I have had the pleasure of being introduced to you all—that we symbolise in our several persons, the seven polite professions, and the seven different sorts and conditions of men, intellectually, socially, and—pardon me for speaking the truth—morally. On either hand of me'—here the Professor bowed courteously to Professor P——, and the Rev. Mr. M——, 'sit science and religion. In the front of me'—with a gracious inclination to Judge S—— and myself—'sit law and medicine. I also notice, with pleasure'—here the Professor smiled pleasantly in the direction of Mr. B——, the broker, and Mr. G——, the club man—'that my friends, law and medicine, are ably supported by my other friends, business and leisure.

"'Myself I shall modestly designate labour, as upon me will devolve the work of giving the theoretical principle of my experiment a practical shape, and I can assure you it will entail no little labour to do so. I shall, possibly, never be fortunate enough to chance upon the same combination again. I think I can say, with perfect truth, that we combine within ourselves all the elements and conditions necessary for success. The next question is, will you accord me your assistance? Briefly, what I propose is this: First, that we constitute ourselves into a Theosophical Society—call it a club if you will. Secondly, that we secure an apartment which will insure us privacy. Thirdly, that you spare me an hour or two of your time once a week. I will engage on my part, not to overtax your forbearance, and I think, nay, I feel assured that you will be richly repaid for your time and trouble. I shall be pleased to hear how my proposal strikes each one of you individually.'

"Again there was an awkward pause, and for a moment or two nobody spoke. Mr. B——, the broker, was the first to break the silence. Bowing to Professor C——, he said:

"'The proposition, gentlemen, strikes me as being an eminently fair one, and we should certainly lack in politeness to our guest if we failed to accede to it. As for the end aimed at, I am incompetent to speak. I do not know much about science in any of its branches, particularly the branch the Professor has been discussing. I shall, however, be happy to do my part, so far as in me lies, in the matter of attendance, providing that does not much exceed, as the Professor intimated, an hour or two once a week, and so far as money is concerned, I shall guarantee that the Professor's experiments shall not suffer for lack of that.'

"This speech, brief and to the point, was greeted with applause.

"Mr. G——, of the Union Club, next signified his adherence to the plan, reiterating in a degree the sentiments of Mr. B——. Judge S—— was the next to fall into line. Professor P—— and myself stated frankly that we were not deterred by any scruples but that of expense. We said we did not care to go blindly into any scheme without having some idea of what cost it would entail, while the Rev. Mr. M—— demurred to becoming a member of a theosophical society on the ground that it was unbefitting a minister of the gospel.

"'Being a man, however, of liberal ideas, he was

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eventually won over by the arguments of Professor C——, while as regards the prudential objections of Professor P—— and myself, it was shown that the necessary expense of renting and furnishing a club-room suitable for the purpose was insignificant, while with regard to whatever else was necessary in the way of apparatus, etc., Professor C—— said that as he alone knew what was necessary, he alone must be responsible for providing it. He also stated that four weekly meetings extending over one month would be sufficient to give his theory a fair test.

"Messrs. B—— and G—— were then unanimously elected a committee of ways and means, and these gentlemen are responsible for the elegant club-rooms, which our society enjoys, and to which, by the way, I am empowered to extend you an invitation by Professor C—— and the other members, for next Thursday evening at eleven o'clock, when you can judge for yourself of the aim and scope of our undertaking."

"And have the results you have achieved," I asked, after expressing my thanks and hearty acceptance of the invitation, "answered your expectations?"

"Yes and no," returned Dr. W—— sententiously; "in the first place, the society has as yet held only three formal meetings, which have been devoted to listening to very delightful addresses from Professor C—— upon such topics as 'Intercourse with the Superior Intelligences,' 'The Higher Life,' and so on; these discourses being followed by an exercise, or species of training, in what the Professor calls 'the art of concentration.' Most of them were inclined to smile, and some of us did laugh heartily upon the first occasion, at the peculiar apparatus which forms a part of this exercise, but the simple and sincere earnestness of the Professor, his logical explanation of the meaning of what we were called upon to do, and his immovable confidence in the efficacy of his methods to bring about what he aims at, namely, a real and tangible communication with the 'higher intelligences,' as he terms them, were sufficient to repress any disposition on the part of any of our number towards unbecoming levity.

"How it will all end, or anything will come of our meetings and exercises in the way the Professor hopes, I, for my part, more than doubt. To tell the truth, I am no believer in these new-fangled metaphysical theories at all, and were it not that we are in honour bound to give our guest all the assistance and countenance we can, for at least one month, most of us, I think, would have politely withdrawn from the society.

"At the next meeting, however, we are led to expect great developments. A certain appliance, we are told, which had to be specially constructed for the purpose, and which has been, since the formation of the society in process of manufacture, will be completed and put in place upon the occasion. You will then be able to see and judge for yourself of the whole business. Till then, good-bye. I see I have an appointment with a patient."

During the next week I had occasion, as usual, to pass frequently by the rooms of the Pentagram Club. In the early part of the week I noticed an unusual bustle in the corridor where these rooms were. Large packing-cases were lying about, one of which, indeed, was so large that a door had to be taken off its hinges, and the jambs and part of the partition wall removed, before it could be introduced into the apartments. The glimpse of the interior which I gained through this opening convinced me that theosophy need not necessarily be allied to asceticism, at any rate, when members of the sect happen to be capitalists or brokers.

Several minutes before eleven, on the following Thursday night, found me before the door bearing the mystic star, as I was determined that nothing should suffer through my tardiness. It had not occurred to me to make my presence known by knocking, as I heard no signs of life inside, and was not prepared for the remark of my friend, Dr.——, who was the first to arrive.

Before the door bearing the mystic star.

"Why didn't you knock?" he asked. "Professor C—— is inside, and you are expected. But come in, and I will introduce you."

We passed together into a very elegantly and tastefully furnished apartment, at a table in which a gentleman was reading. Professor C——, to whom I was then, for the first time, introduced, though I had known him for many years by reputation as one of the most, if not the most, distinguished *savant* in his particular sphere in the world, welcomed me cordially and said that he hoped, nay, that he felt confident, I would witness that night some of the sublimest phenomena it was possible to conceive. Our conversation was, however, interrupted at the outset by the arrival in quick succession of other members of the club, and after the usual few minutes allowed for the interchange of greetings had passed, the meeting was informally called to order by Professor C—— in the following terms:

"Gentlemen and fellow members, it gives me great gratification to inform you that the apparatus for which we have been waiting has been constructed according to order, and that it is complete in every particular. I have been for two days past superintending its disposition in our exercise-room, and if you are all of you ready we will now proceed to test it."

The Professor then led the way to the folding-doors communicating with the next apartment, and, pushing them aside, we passed through. Here a scene met my eyes which necessitates a somewhat close description.

This room was perfectly bare of decoration of any kind save a gas-chandelier suspended from the ceiling, all the burners of which were lighted. The uncarpeted floor exposed the hard wood boards of which it was made. In the centre of the floor stood a circular platform of some polished black wood, I think ebony, supported at a height of some ten or twelve inches from the floor by a series of stout glass pillows or pedestals, seven in number.

The circular platform, which measured, I should say, some sixteen or eighteen feet in diameter, was scored by a number of interlacing lines, stretching from one point of the periphery to another, along which some fine yellow powder, that looked like resin, had been strewn to the width of perhaps an inch. These interlacing lines formed a heptagonal figure drawn upon the principle of the pentagram, and at each of the seven

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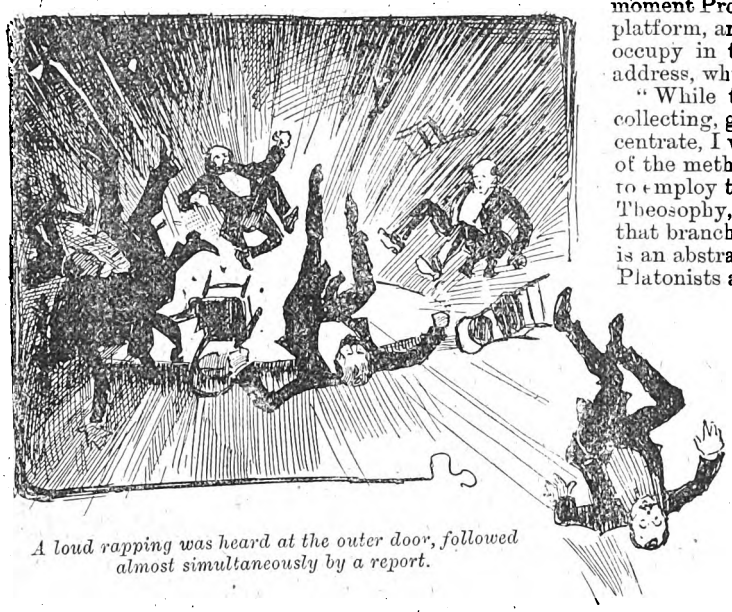
angles of this figure, and close to the edge of the platform, stood an ordinary wooden chair.

In the centre of this heptagonal figure stood an object which arrested my attention. The construction of a heptagonal figure, on the lines of the pentagram, involves a central space left blank within the intersecting lines of the figure. Within this blank space lay a flat, polished disc of glass, some four feet in diameter, and several inches in thickness, and upon this disc rested a huge glass bell, shaped like the receiver of an air pump, some seven feet in height by, perhaps, three feet and a half in width. What struck me most, with regard to the size and general proportions of this bell, was that a full-grown man of large stature could have stood and moved comfortably within it.

From the apex of this bell issued a series of cords, which looked like insulated wires, the resemblance being



A loud rapping was heard at the outer door, followed almost simultaneously by a report.

further heightened by the fact that each of them ended in a metal handle, such as is used on galvanic batteries, two of which lay upon each chair. To complete the strange and mysterious accessories of the apartment, suspended from the ceiling by a line passed through a block, so that it could be raised or lowered at pleasure was a nondescript appliance which I shall endeavour to describe. From a brass ball, some inches in diameter, radiated seven curved brass rods, each of which formed the arc of a quadrant, and ended in an oval band of metal, the whole structure being so arranged that each of the terminal oval bands of metal hung suspended directly over one of the seven chairs.

It was not long before I discovered the use and object of this strange contrivance. My eye took in at a glance what it has taken me several minutes to describe, and as soon as we had all filed into the room, the others stepped on to the circular platform and took their seats, evidently by preconcerted arrangement, with the exception of Professor C——, who released the line holding the suspended system of rods, so that it was lowered till each of the other six had fixed the oval metal band, in which each rod terminated, securely upon his forehead.

He then detached by means of a forked rod the brass ball from the line, so that the whole structure was free. Meanwhile, each of the six had taken in their hands the metallic terminals of the wires that issued from the apex of the glass ball. I had, meanwhile, settled into one of the two chairs remaining vacant, which stood in one of the corners left by the platform near the door, and towards which the Professor had motioned me on entering.

I must confess that the situation, at first sight, impressed me as somewhat ludicrous. The spectacle of six scientific, religious, hard-headed, reputable, and rich—as the case might be—gentlemen of the nineteenth century engaging in such a fantastical mummery as this struck me, as I say, at first as something supremely funny, and I could quite appreciate the sentiments of my friend the Doctor over his first similar experience. This disposition to ridicule disappeared, however, the moment Professor C—— began to talk. Ascending the platform, and standing in front of the chair he was to occupy in the circle, he delivered the following brief address, which I took down verbatim:

"While the fluids necessary to our experiment are collecting, gentlemen, and before it is necessary to concentrate, I will say a few words regarding the rationale of the methods we are now the first among human kind to employ to communicate with the higher intelligences. Theosophy, as generally understood, and more especially that branch of it which has sprung up in modern times, is an abstract science, its votaries living like the Neo-Platonists and early mystics in the realm of ideas.

"But, my friends, the new theosophy, of which I am the humble, but confident exponent and apostle, works by a surer method in its dealings with the beings with whom it desires to communicate. Suppose we admit that the spirit, for instance, after leaving the body, mingles with, and becomes lost in the illimitable Nirvana. The mission of the new theosophy is to draw that spirit thence, to reconstruct it, in fine, to condense it again from the Nirvana, or primitive element into which it has been absorbed into a quasi-material form, which shall be appreciable to one or more of our corporeal senses.

"The means, gentlemen, are before you, in you, and at your command. Your heads, the seats of your several intelligences, are connected together by these metal rods, terminating in yonder metal ball. Wires, again, proceed from your several hands to yonder insulated receiver standing in your midst, where they also meet in a common focus, namely, that other metal knob which you see in the apex of the bell. Thus there is a focus without, towards which you draw from the illimitable ether, and a focus within, towards which you concentrate. You constitute in effect a very powerful battery, though the fluid, or force, which it generates is more subtle and ethereal than that generated by ordinary chemical action.

"The next step, gentlemen," continued Professor C——, as he took his seat in the only vacant chair upon the platform, adjusted the metal band upon his temples, and grasped the handles of the remaining wires, "is to concentrate. Let us agree upon some intelligence—some notable being, let us say, who once lived upon this earth, for though that condition should not be, if my theory is correct, essential in practice, for all intelligences, I hold,

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that exist in the infinite Nirvana should be equally amenable to law, yet it commends itself as more suitable for a first experiment—and then let us exert our wills in silent invocation for its presence. If my theory is correct, the intelligence unanimously invoked will make itself known to us in yonder insulated receiver."

Several names were proposed as widely apart as Plato, Napoleon, Newton, Darwin, Shakespeare, the choice finally settling upon Shakespeare as a compromise, the question as to whether he was or was not the author of the plays not militating, Professor C—— said, against his availability as a subject.

Several badly-frightened gentlemen.

"And now let me caution you," said the Professor gravely, "against permitting your thoughts to wander from the matter in hand. It is not only that concentration is absolutely essential to the accomplishment of our aim, but for all I can tell—this is an untried experiment, as you are aware—any serious defect in this respect may be attended with danger. We are dealing, it must be remembered, with the most potent force in nature, and must be correspondingly cautious. If we preserve equanimity and act harmoniously, I am confident we have nothing to fear. But, above all things, let us keep our attention fixed upon the matter in hand. Now."

It was certainly a curious spectacle, as I sat in my chair in the corner and watched and waited. Seven gentlemen, some in evening dress, representing widely different circles in society, sitting on an insulated circular platform, their chairs ranged with mathematical precision in a heptagon, in their centre a vast glass bell, from which radiated a system of telegraphic wires, while from their heads rose a structure of metal rods, which towered above them in the centre, looking, with its curved sides and spherical apex, for all the world like a gigantic crown. The light from the chandelier threw the whole scene into vivid relief, and seemed perfectly in keeping with this exhibition of nineteenth century necromancy, if such it could be called, conducted on scientific principles and with one of the ablest *savants* in the world for its prophet and high priest.

I looked at my watch—it was not yet half-past eleven The minutes passed on as I watched the strangely-assorted figures on the platform, sitting silent and immobile at their fantastic employment. But my reverie was cut abruptly short. I became aware that something was going on in the glass bell. Yes, there could be no doubt about it, the bell seemed to be filled with a greyish mist slowly moving and convoluting upon itself, while upon the glass sides appeared those signs of of condensation one sees upon window panes on a cold day.

I could see by the excitement on the faces of those upon the platform that they were fully aware of the phenomenon also.

In a minute more, the drops upon the sides of the bell cleared away and an indistinct and shadowy form began to take shape.

As the seconds passed, it assumed greater distinctness and regularity. A human head, with broad, expansive brow, seemed to grow from a body of medium height and symmetrical structure. I caught a glimpse—it was only a glimpse, so riveted was my gaze by the spectacle in the glass bell—of the smile of triumph which irradiated the countenance of Professor S——; of the mingled awe and perplexity depicted upon the visage of the Reverend Mr. M——; of the look of keen analysis which overspread the face of Dr. W——; of some trembling arms and shaking limbs of figures sitting with their backs to me; and the next moment a loud rapping was heard at the outer door, followed almost simultaneously by a report like that of a small cannon, accompanied with a lightning flash, after which there was complete darkness. I felt a large body hurled against me, and by the time I had scrambled to my feet from where I had fallen, one of the burners of the chandelier, which had been extinguished by the explosion, again burst into light, and I saw Professor C—— standing in the centre of the platform in the act of lighting the others.

The glass bell was nowhere to be seen, but in its place a little heap of pulverised glass lay piled upon the glass disc which supported it. Several badly frightened gentlemen had now picked themselves up from various quarters of the room where they had fallen, looking ruefully ludicrous.

No one had been hurt, fortunately. Explanations followed.

It turned out that Dr. W——'s wife had been taken suddenly ill, and she, knowing where he was, had sent the servant after him.

Professor C—— maintains that the explosion occurred through the spirit of Shakespeare having been suddenly left without the moral support necessary for its corporeal maintenance, owing to the distraction of the minds of the members of the circle from their work of concentration, by the sudden knocking at the door, and had accordingly returned incontinently to the bosom of Nirvana and its place in the universal ether. He is triumphant, however, over the undoubted success of his experiment, and is backed up by all the other members of the club, in proof whereof a new bell has been ordered.

The most striking circumstances about the explosion, in my eyes, lay in the fact that no one was hurt, and that the glass bell crumbled into dust—not fragments—like a Prince Rupert's drop, and that not one particle of that dust fell outside of the glass disc that stood in the centre of the heptagon.

Robert Duncan Milne.

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TWICE TEN YEARS.

I REMEMBER it as well as if it were yesterday. The carriage stood at the door that was to take me back to school for the spring term. My mother gave me innumerable instructions, smoothed my collar, and adjusted my cap on my head properly, then gave me a kiss and stood looking wistfully at me as I went down the walk and got into the carriage.

A month or two later—it was in June, I think—after a hard struggle one afternoon with some figures, all about a ship and a cargo and the profit and all that, I went out to join the boys. When I reached the playground they were gone, and there was nothing for me to do but amuse myself as best I could. I strolled about the house with my hands in my pockets (which my mother had told me distinctly I must not do), and suddenly remembering her instructions took them out again, then, for want of better amusement, I began to whistle.

Next to the school there was a pretty cottage separated from the school-house by a board fence. The two houses were not one hundred feet apart, and I could look right through under the trees, and there on the tennis-ground stood a girl a trifle younger than myself looking straight at me.

Now, when a boy suddenly finds himself observed by a girl, he feels quite queer. I remember that very well. My hands went right into my pockets, but remembering that was not the correct thing to do in the presence of a girl, I took them directly out again. Then I concluded that it would be a good way to show how little I was embarrassed by turning twice around upon my heel, a movement on which I greatly prided myself. After that I don't remember now—it was so long ago—what new capers I cut. But one thing is very certain. I was soon hunting for something I pretended to have lost in the grass beside the fence.

"If it's your knife you've lost," I heard a little voice say, "it isn't there. I picked up a knife there a week ago, but it was all rusty and no good."

"Oh, never mind," I said, looking up into two eyes peeping out from a sun-bonnet, "it wasn't much of a knife, and I've got another."

"Are you one of the boys at the school?"

"Yes."

"What form are you in?"

"The Fourth."

"Do you study geography?"

"Yes."

"What's the capital of Austria?"

I scratched my head.

"I don't remember that," I admitted reluctantly. "I'm first rate on capitals, but I can't recollect that one."

"Why didn't you go off with the boys?"

"I was behind with my sums. I expect they've gone to the river. I like the woods pretty well, they're full of squirrels."

"And lizards," she added. "I'm not afraid of lizards. I suppose you're afraid to go there."

"No, I'm not."

"If you want to go there now, and are afraid, I don't mind going with you, just to keep off the lizards and things."

She looked wistfully out at the wood. I can see her now leaning on her bat, deliberating—if such a process can be called deliberation where the conclusion is predetermined—the straight, lithe figure poised between the bat and one foot, one little leg crossed on the other—peering out at the forest. Suddenly, without any warning, she dropped the bat and started for the wood.

We were not long in crossing the field, and were walking in the dense shade when she stopped, and looking at me with her expressive eyes said:

"How still it is in here! It seems to me I can almost hear it be still."

"Yes, it is pretty solemn," I replied. "Let's go on; the river winds about down there, and we can see the water go over the dam."

I heard a distant voice calling "Julia." It was very faint; she did not hear it; I stood a moment hesitating.

"Come, let's go," I said, starting forward.

"Julia," I heard again, more faintly than before.

I hurried her on, fearing she would hear the voice and turn back.

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Presently we emerged from the wood and stood by the river. I was familiar with the ground, and led my little friend directly to the dam.

"Most of the boys are afraid to walk out on that dam," I said.

"I'd be afraid."

"But you're only a girl: a boy oughtn't to be afraid." With that I started boldly out, occasionally standing on one foot, and performing sundry antics to show what a brave boy I was. Then I came part-way back and called to her to come.

"Oh, no," she said; "I'm afraid."

"Afraid! You little goose! With me to hold on to?"

Betwixt her fear and a disposition pliable to a boy older and stronger than herself, it was not long before I was leading her out on the dam.

"Don't you see it's nothing?" I said.

She shrank back as I led her along. I determined that she should go to a point where the water poured over a portion of the dam lower than the rest. I turned my back to step up on the post. It was but a moment. I heard a cry, and saw Julia in the flood. The expression that was in her eyes is to this day stamped clearly on my memory—an expression of mingled reproach and forgiveness.

I could scarcely swim a dozen strokes, but not a second had elapsed before I was in the water.

I swam and struggled and buffeted to reach her; all in vain. An eddy whirled me in a different direction. My strength was soon exhausted. I was borne down the river, sinking and rising, till I came to a place where I caught a glimpse as I rose to the surface of a man running along some planks extending into the river, and raised above the water on posts. My feet became entangled in weeds. I sank. I heard a great roaring in my ears, then oblivion.

When I came to I was lying on my back. I remember the first thing I saw was a light cloud sailing over the clear blue. There was an air of quiet and peace in it that contrasted with my own sensations. Then I saw a man on his knees beside something he was rubbing. I turned my head aside and saw it was a little figure—a girl, Julia. She was cold and stark.

My agony was far greater than when I had plunged after her into the stream. Then I hoped and believed that if she were drowned I would be also. Now I saw her beside me lifeless, and I lived.

Then some men came, and the man who was rubbing Julia said to them: "Take care of the boy; the girl is too far gone." They took me up and carried me away, and laid me for a while on a bed in a strange house. Then I was driven to the school.

The next day my father came and took me home. I was ill after that, too ill to ask about Julia, but when I recovered what a load was taken from my mind to know that by dint of rubbing and rolling and a stimulant she had been brought to and had recovered. I also learnt that the man who cared for us had seen Julia fall and had rescued her. When I saw him running along the planks it was to his boat chained to the end.

That summer my father removed with his family to Devonshire. He was obliged to wait some time for my recovery, but at last I was able to travel, and left without again seeing the little girl whom I had led into danger. I only heard that I had been blamed by everyone.

* * * * *

Ten years passed, during which I was constantly haunted by one idea; that was to go back and find Julia and implore her forgiveness. The years that I must be a boy and dependent seemed interminable. At last I came of age and received a small fortune that had fallen to me, and as soon as the papers in the case were duly signed and sealed I started.

It was just about the same time of the year and the same hour of the afternoon as when I first saw Julia that I walked into the old school grounds. I had fully intended to go in next door and call for her, but my courage failed me. I had heard nothing of her for years. Was she dead? Was she living? Was she in her old home, or far away? These thoughts chased each other through my mind, and I dreaded to know.

I was standing at the school entrance with my hand on the bell when I heard a door in the next house open and then shut. From that moment I could feel that Julia was near me. She came out of the house, a slender, graceful girl of nineteen, and picking up a tennis bat, commenced to knock the balls about. I wanted to make myself known, but dreaded the horror with which she would regard me when she should know who I was.

"I beg your pardon," I said, raising my hat, "can you tell me if the school is still there?" pointing to the house.

"It was moved some years ago," she replied, regarding me with the old honest gaze.

"I was one of the scholars."

"Indeed!" She spoke without any further encouragement for me to go on.

"I see the wood has not been cut away," I added, glancing towards it.

"No, it does not seem to be."

"Were you ever there?"

"Oh, yes, often."

"And is that old dam still across the river?"

"I believe it is."

She looked at me curiously. I went on without waiting for a reply:

"Would you mind showing me the way to it? It is a long while since I was there."

She drew herself up with a slight hauteur. Then thinking that, perhaps, I was unaccustomed to the conventional ways of civilised life, she said pleasantly:

"You have only to walk through the wood straight, at the back of the house, and you will come to it."

"Thank you," I replied, "but I hoped you would show me the way."

She looked puzzled.

"Miss Julia," I said, altering my tone, "I once met you when I was a boy here at school."

"I knew a number of scholars," she said, more interested; "who may you be?"

I dreaded to tell her. "If you will pilot me to the dam," I said, "I will inform you."

She thought a moment, then turned and looked out at the wood. With the quick motion with which she had made the same move as a child she started forward.

We walked side by side to the wood, through it out on the river bank. There was the water and the dam; everything as it had been.

"Did you ever try to walk out there?" I asked.

"Once, when I was a child, I came here with a boy, and we walked to where the water pours over. I met with an accident. I fell in."

"The boy overpersuaded you, I suppose?"

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It was difficult for me to conceal a certain trepidation at the mention of my fault.

"No, I went of my own accord."

"He certainly must have been to blame. He was older and stronger than you."

"On the contrary," she said, with a slight rising irritation, "he jumped after me like the noble little fellow that he was."

I turned away on pretence of examining a boat down the river.

"At any rate he must have begged your forgiveness on his bended knees for permitting you to go into such a danger."

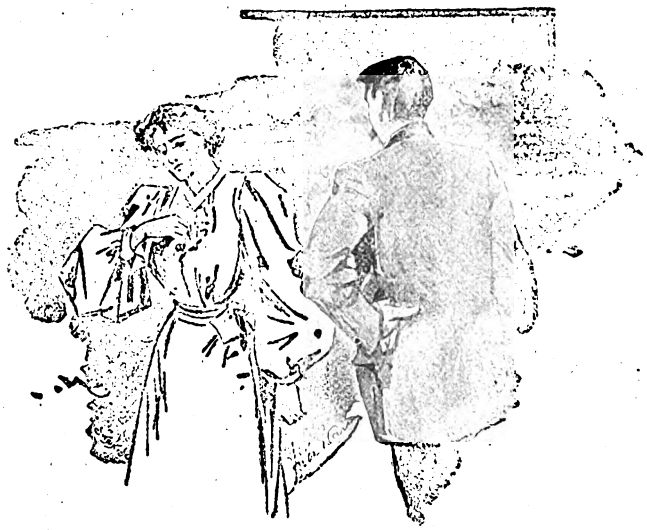
"I never saw him again. He went away."

I fancied—at least, I hoped—I could detect a tinge of sadness in her voice.

"I have often wished," she went on, "that he would come back, as the other scholars sometimes do, as you are now, and let me tell him how much I thank him for his noble effort."

"Julia," I said, suddenly turning and facing her. "This is too much. I am that boy. I led you into the wood. I forced you to go out on the dam with me. I permitted you to fall in."

"And more than atoned for all by risking your life to save me!"



"I knew a number of scholars," she said.

Ah, that look of surprised delight which accompanied her words! It was worth all my past years of suffering, of fancied blame; for in it I read how dearly she held the memory of the boy who had at least shared the danger for which he was responsible.

I do not remember if she grasped my hand or I grasped hers. At any rate, we stood hand in hand looking into each other's faces.

I blessed the Providence that ended my punishment; I blessed the good fortune that had led me to a knowledge of the kindly heart beside me. Of all the moments of my life I still count it far the happiest.

Then we walked back through the woods, over the intervening field, and stood together leaning against the fence between the old school and her home.

* * *

We did not part after that for another ten years. Then she left me to go whence I can never recall her. Yet there is a trysting place in the woods, through which we once passed as children and often afterwards as lovers. There I watch the flecked sunlight and mark the silence, and it seems to me that I can "hear it be still." More than that, I know the pure soul looks at me through the honest eyes.

Kate Rathmore.

In next week's SHORT STORIES will commence a new serial entitled, "The Great Middlewick Bank Robbery."

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Full particulars appear in the issue of *The Story Teller* dated February 29th (1d. every Wednesday), which also contains a complete story by Reginald Baird, the first part of a thrilling narrative (complete in two parts) by Basil Burgoyne, and instalments of serials by Joan Barrett, Gertrude Warden, and Ida Deahl.

IN AN EARLY NUMBER

will commence a powerful story by Frederick Leslie, entitled, "Sindbad's Valley."

BE ON THE LOOK-OUT FOR IT.

PEARSON'S MAGAZINE.

THE March number of *Pearson's Magazine*, published on Friday, February 28th, is an even more marvellous sixpennyworth than the preceding issues.

The series of notes and reproductions of famous pictures under the general heading, "Artists and their Work," continues to improve; while the five full-page plates by Abbey Altson, illustrating a poem by Norman Gale, are full of artistic beauty.

Lady Henry Somerset tells a pathetic story of the self-sacrificing act of a French Sister of Mercy, who saves the lives of her child-charges against a mad dog at the cost of her own, and the narrative is imbellished with illustrations by Mr. G. G. Manton. Mr. Allen Upward continues his "Secrets of the Courts of Europe" with an account of the tragic death of the Sultan Abdul Aziz.

Sir Walter Besant and Mr. W. H. Pollock continue their charming series of "Drawing-room Comedies"; and there are other stories by Mr. Stanley J. Weyman, Frankfort Moore, and Robert Barr. Other articles in this excellent sixpennyworth are: "What it Costs to Run the P. and O. Steamship Company"; "The Grave of a Nation's Honour," by George Griffith—being a full and truthful account of the condition of the Panama Canal to-day; another instalment of W. L. Alden's humorous reflections on topical subjects under the heading: "Wisdom Let Loose"; a vivid description of the Chapel of Bones at Malta, with reproductions of photographs; and "The Great Water Joke," by J. F. Sullivan.

6d. Published on the first of each month. 6d.

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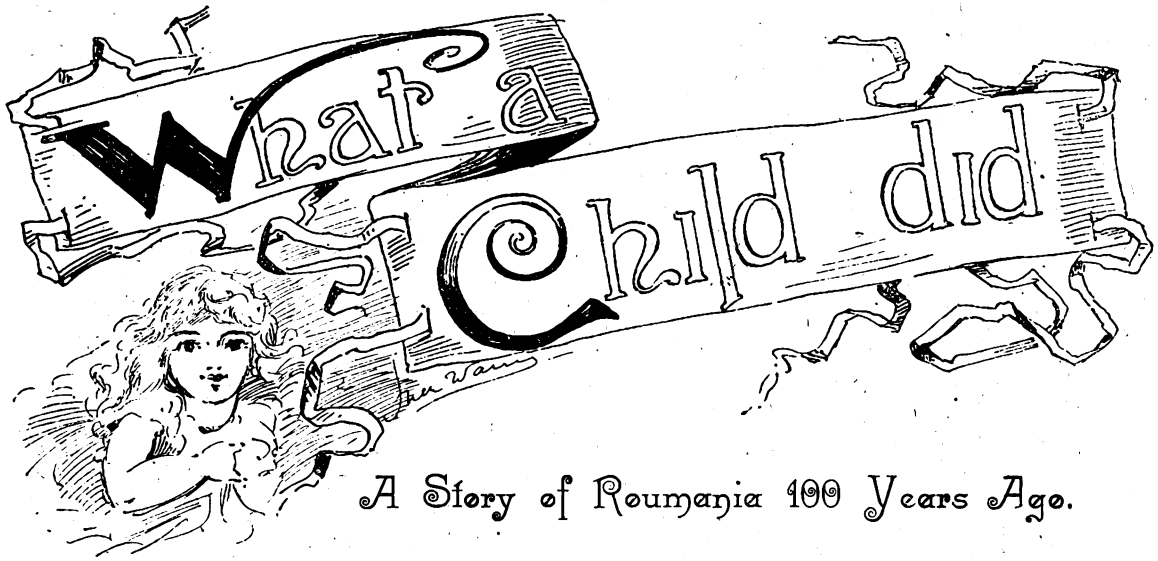

A Story of Roumania 100 Years Ago.

I AM decidedly fond of antiquities (I'm old myself now); that is to say, I am an amateur antiquarian. I am not quite sure that I should care to be a professional one. If I were rich and *could* devote all my time to antiquarian researches, it is quite probable that my love for them would cool; but as I have to pay strict attention to my business during the ordinary hours of labour, and can only ride my hobby during a small portion of the week, my enthusiasm increases rather than diminishes. I would go miles to see an old book, coin or vase; I am often at the British Museum; I have spent many a ten minutes gazing at the Needle; and if any magazine or book contains merely an illustration of something ancient, it fetches me at once. (Well! I've written it now, so I trust that I—an antiquarian!—may be pardoned for using so modern a term as "fetch.")

My firm does business in most of the countries of Europe, and as I have all the principal languages at my fingers' ends—it's quite a gift, of course—I do a good deal of the foreign correspondence myself. It's practice, you see. In the course of the past three years I have succeeded in scraping acquaintance (I believe that expression is sufficiently antiquated) with the principals of several foreign firms and have thereby been able to add to my museum. The head of a certain Roumanian firm, by name Licherdopol, is a man of tastes similar to my own, and as I was able to do him an exceedingly good turn a short time ago, we have become great friends. He would insist upon my accepting some token of gratitude, and last week I received a perfect treasure in the shape of a manuscript, yellow with age, and much worn and torn. It must have cost him a pang to part with it. I tell you it would take a lot of money to get it away from *me!*

As will be seen, the manuscript is the work of an eye-witness—an old man, with just enough learning to be able to write down, in a mixed language, what he saw, and his impressions thereon. The parchment being worn, there are gaps in the story, but Mr. Licherdopol's particulars happily enable me to supply what is lacking. In this form I place it before you.

* * * * * *

I am full of years, and the time cannot be far distant when I shall leave all this trouble behind. I have lived through terrible times, and I pray nightly that I may be spared the pain of passing through much more of this tribulation. Battle, robbery, murder, the arbitrary taking of life by those who have might on their side, the violation of all that is sacred—all this is of everyday occurrence. I am tired—oh, so tired of it! Yet to-day I have witnessed that which engenders within me the hope that all the goodness has not gone out of my fellow-man. Perhaps I am wrong; an old dotard, they would call me. Nevertheless, it is so different from what we see day by day that I feel impelled to make use of the little learning I possess to set down the events of this day. Learning! It will be a relief to put mine to some use; many a time have I cursed it, for it renders the feelings more acute, and has made me more unhappy in the midst of these troubles than those who cannot use the quill.

I will tell it just as it happened. Toudor Vladimiresco, the brave defender of Roumanian rights and privileges, after having driven back the hordes of Ypsilanti, had decided to fix his headquarters in our village for the winter. Of course, there was great excitement in the village. It is a grand thing to have valiant defenders of the Fatherland, but the pandours had gained a reputation which made the villagers ask themselves—and ask one another in whispers—whether it was worse to be pillaged by the enemy or "protected" by the pandours!

Toudor was against all such excesses as his men were known to have been guilty of, but he could not entirely stop them. He was a terrible disciplinarian, and strung up the men for the slightest act of disobedience, but outrages of all kinds were committed without the culprits being traced. On the march from Bucharest to Golesti he had ordered ten men to be hanged because he suspected that they had been concerned in a robbery and outrage which had been reported to him. This was such an arbitrary act that even his pandours, who were usually in mortal fear of him, began to murmur. His next act aroused a spirit of rebellion in some of his officers, and this led to what I alluded to at the beginning. Finding that his orders were disregarded by the men when there was the least chance of doing so without detection, he issued an order to his officers that he

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Marin's sweetheart struggling despairingly in the grasp of two men.

should hold them responsible for any offence committed by the men, and he demanded that they should sign a document accepting the responsibility. No doubt he thought that the officers would thus be compelled to look more closely after the men, but such an arbitrary step was quite without parallel, even for Toudor Vladimiresco, and there were many murmurs of resentment.

I was near a group of the men, trying to sell a few things, when Toudor's orderly approached the officer—a handsome young man—with a paper for him to sign, making him responsible.

I saw the young fellow's eyes flash indignantly as the orderly held out the paper and said something which I could not catch.

"If Toudor Vladimiresco wishes to haul us up to the nearest tree," the officer exclaimed in a voice of mingled scorn and anger, "he is able to work his will upon us without asking our permission. We are not bound to sign our lives away!"

He snatched the sheet from the hand of the orderly, tore it into small pieces, and threw them down.

Oh, it was a grand sight to see him standing there, a picture of manly dignity, his head thrown back and his piercing eyes fixed on the face of Toudor's messenger, who looked quite dazed at the audacity of Marin Tanase. But even as I gazed with admiration upon him my heart sank within me, for I knew the fate in store for him. Toudor Vladimiresco suffered no disobedience.

The messenger went away towards the house in which the leader had taken up his abode, while Marin left the men and strolled off in the opposite direction. My work required that I should go into the next village, but I could not leave the neighbourhood. I felt constrained by some unseen force to keep near Toudor's dwelling in order to see what came of the act of rebellion I had witnessed. My heart grew heavy with grief for Marin and his affianced bride, both of whom I had known from childhood; evil would come of it, I was convinced, and I would cheerfully have given my life to have saved him. Others were of the same opinion; they had had experience of Toudor's discipline, and they waited about expecting to see a guard sent out to fetch the rebel. But there was no movement.

As time went on and nothing occurred, I began to feel relieved. It was strange that Vladimiresco should take no notice of an act of insubordination, but I thought that it might well be due to the restraining influence of intercourse with his wife and child. For, having taken up his winter quarters, it meant rest from warfare until the spring, unless something unforeseen should cause the enemy to make a move in spite of the time of the year. So Toudor has sent for his wife and his three-year-old daughter—they say he is passionately fond of her, although he does not think much of her mother—and no doubt means to enjoy their society.

It was about four o'clock when I heard that Vladimiresco was holding a council or something of that kind in the Willow Walk. There is plenty of room for a large assembly of men in the Walk, it was close to his abode, and it would not be dusk till five o'clock, so that there was nothing extraordinary in the fact that he was holding a council; but my heart was seized with a sudden fear when Gianta, who told me the news, added that Marin, who had been walking with his sweetheart, had been specially summoned to attend.

I hurried to the Walk as fast as my old legs would carry me, and this is what I saw.

Toudor Vladimiresco with his chief officer standing in the centre of a circular clearing in the Walk; Marin with his back to a tree, his hands tied, and the noose of a rope around his neck, the rope having been thrown over a stout bough; Anica, Marin's sweetheart, struggling despairingly in the grasp of two men who were preventing her from approaching her lover; and the pandours forming a circle all round.

"Take her away!" I heard Vladimiresco cry, as (by the kindness of some of the men who knew me) I managed to get near enough to witness all. "We want no women here!" Then, as two other men were coming forward to assist, he suddenly changed his mind. "Let her stay, but see that she does not interrupt!" he said brutally. "She shall see how we punish insubordination!"

Anica, quite exhausted, fell upon her knees and hid her face in her hands. Marin's face was deadly pale and his lips twitched. I know it was not fear, because his eyes were blazing defiance; it was the suffering of Anica which upset him. I saw a spot of blood on his upper lip, and Donaro has told me that Toudor himself struck Marin for having called him a cur! So what could the poor boy do? He could only wait for death; to have asked Toudor to put an end to him quickly would have been useless, because Vladimiresco wished to inspire fear in the hearts of others who might have a desire to rebel against his orders.

"Tighten the rope a little!" ordered the leader. Two men drew the noose just tight enough to be irksome.

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A moan of despair came from Anica, but Marin never flinched.

"Marin Tanase," said Vladimiresco, addressing the doomed man, "you have been guilty of insubordination, and must die."

He stopped for a moment, and then I saw just the shadow of a fiendish smile cross his face.

"There is one way of saving your life," he continued. "Down on your knees and crave pardon, and you shall go free."

Anica looked up at her lover half-expectantly. But Marin shouted "Never!" with a vehemence that was not to be mistaken.

"Then pray for your soul, for in thirty seconds you will be swinging from that branch," said Toudor savagely.

The men pulled the rope tight, in readiness for the order from the leader. Marin's lips moved slightly as if in prayer. We were all waiting to hear the word from Vladimiresco, when something unexpected happened.

A little girl of three, with a look of distress upon her face, Vladimiresco's daughter, came tripping forward into the clearing, looking this way and that way with the natural curiosity of an intelligent child. How did she come there? Was it the finger of Providence? Her attention was attracted in some way towards Marin. She walked up to him, and looked at him earnestly.

"Does it hurt you?" asked the child.

"Poor man!" said the little one with childish sympathy. "Is you ill?"

Marin could only stare at her. Anica sprang to her feet, her breath coming in pants.

"Does it hurt you?" asked the child after a pause, the treble voice betraying some anxiety.

Still no reply. Our glances went from the child to the father, who was staring in perplexity at the strange scene.

"Take it off!" continued the little girl. Then as Marin did not move, she said in a reassuring tone: "Me take it off for you!"

She reached up towards his neck, but finding that it was too high up, she pulled at him to drag him on to his knees. The men involuntarily loosened the rope and Marin, scarcely knowing what he did, knelt down in front of her.

Little Jeanne put her tiny fingers on the rope and made a childish endeavour to loosen it. I looked around instinctively and shall never forget the sight. I am not scholar enough to describe it. Marin, a slight flush on his cheeks, a gleam of hope in his eyes; Anica, her arms outstretched towards her lover and the child, held back by the two men; Toudor Vladimiresco, perplexed and uneasy; and the pandours watching expectantly.

"I *can't!*" exclaimed the little one, the tears starting to her eyes. She turned and ran up to her father. "Papa," she said, in the imperious tone of a spoiled child, "poor man ill. It *hurts* him. *You* take it off, papa! *Come!*" And she tugged at his tunic with all her strength.

His love for Jeanne was about the only soft spot in Vladimiresco's heart. He would have been inhuman indeed to have resisted that appeal. He followed the child—still tugging at his coat—to where Marin was still kneeling.

"*This*, papa. Take it *off!*" exclaimed Jeanne, pulling at the rope.

Toudor hesitated. The two men looked for a moment into each other's eyes. Then Vladimiresco loosened the noose, slipped it over Marin's head and threw it violently over the bough so that it fell in a heap on the other side.

"Your life is spared," he said abruptly. "Go away, and let me see you no more!"

He turned on his heel and strode away. Marin started to his feet, bewildered at what had taken place. Anica, released by her guards, rushed forward and hugged the child to her breast.

* * * * * *

And there the writing ends. It is rather an abrupt termination, but from the particulars given to me by Mr. Licherdopol, I am able to complete the story. Vladimiresco fell into the hands of the Greeks shortly afterwards, and was put to death without mercy. That is a fact.

Concerning Marin and Anica there is no absolutely authentic information, but tradition says that they removed to another part of Roumania, and married, Marin giving up soldiering, and becoming a farmer. After the death of Vladimiresco, and that of his wife a few months later, they adopted little Jeanne.

G. D.

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Wanted—A Husband.

The following "personal" might have been seen all that summer on the fourth page of a prominent journal:

WANTED.—A young lady residing in the provinces, pretty and distinguished, with a *dot* of three hundred thousand francs, desires to marry a gentleman of about thirty-five years, one in the military or legal profession preferred, who resides in Paris. No agencies.—Address, Madeline T. T., Box 333, this office.

Not every statement in the above advertisement was perfectly true. Elodie Rabotteau, the party referred to, was a young lady to be sure, and is so still, more's the pity. She also resides in the country still, for her father is a judge at Saint Colomban, an obscure town in the Canton of Beauce.

But, between ourselves—first, she was not pretty; second, she was not at all distinguished; third, the above-mentioned three hundred thousand francs are principally expectations from her uncle—a bachelor, it is true, but scarcely forty years of age, and solid as a rock.

As to the "No agencies," that was a base deception. "Madeline T. T., box 333," was really Theodore Tardivel, whose trade it was to arrange matrimonial bargains; but he had recognised the fact that certain clients have an insurmountable prejudice against matrimonial agencies. There are people who for the world would not get into a hackney coach on account of the licence number on it.

"Tardivel has written me a long letter," said Judge Rabotteau to his wife, one morning of last autumn. "Here is his plan. The army manœuvres commence a week from now, and Saint Colomban has been designated to provide quarters for a half-battery of artillery. This half-battery is commanded by Captain Lecomte, and Captain Lecomte wishes to marry a young lady who has been brought up in the country. Now, don't think of anything but making the house look its best. To-morrow you must take Elodie to Chateaudun, and have a new gown made for her. At the same time you can send for a man to tune the piano. We must have a second girl, too, so that the cook will not have to wait at table."

"Goodness!" gasped Madame Rabotteau; "what an expense!"

"I do not deny that it is quite a considerable outlay. But do you, or do you not, want Elodie married? She's twenty-six now, and for the past eight years we have offered her to every bachelor in the country round, to say nothing of widowers. Now a chance offers itself, and we must profit by it. So, old lady, you must bestir yourself. I shall go and fix it with the mayor, so that they quarter the captain on us."

When the first of September came cannons sounded all the morning long through the vast plains that surround Saint Colomban, and towards four o'clock in the afternoon the approach of the half-battery was announced.

Presently the captain appeared at the whitewashed gate, that served as a boundary for Judge Rabotteau's terrestial paradise. The *mise en scène* had been arranged beforehand; Rabotteau, under the spreading acacia tree, was reading the *Revue des Deux Mondes*; his wife, not afar away, was cutting bunches of grapes from the yellowing trellis, and behind the white muslin curtains of the parlour window, Elodie, warned by a preconcerted signal, burst, with the energy of despair, into a love song.

At the sound of the horse's shoes clattering on the paved walk, the Judge put down his review and his wife abandoned her grapes.

The Captain stood before them, cap in hand.

"Madame," he began, with a bow, "allow me to introduce myself. I am——"

"You are known to us already, M. Lecomte. We were expecting you."

The officer bowed and smiled, and shook hands with Rabotteau. Then he was led to the parlour, to the great confusion of Elodie, who suddenly cut short her song, blushing as if she had been a hundred miles from suspecting that an artillery captain was to set foot, that day, within the limits of the canton in which her father administered justice.

The Captain discreetly suggested that he would take his meals at the hotel, but they soon made him understand that that would be an unpardonable insult.

"You must share our modest fare," Madame Rabotteau told him; "we shall not break an egg the more for you."

It is unnecessary to say that the dinner was a feast. By dessert the four people assembled seemed to have known each other for ten years, and the Captain made a conquest of them all.

At ten o'clock he asked permission to retire.

"Of course, dear M. Lecomte," said Madame Rabotteau, "after having such a fatiguing journey, I hope you will sleep well under our modest roof."

In the privacy of the nuptial chamber the husband and wife exchanged their impressions.

"It's just a dream!" the lady declared. "He has such an air of breeding and such perfect manners! Not the least bit like a noisy soldier. And I'm sure the man must have a fortune. He gave forty sous to the constable who showed him the way to the house."

"There is nothing surprising in that, my dear. One can see he is a graduate at the Polytechnic School. They are gentlemen—sober, serious, well-behaved. Did you hear that he had the good taste not to make the least allusion to his matrimonial intentions?"

In the morning, at four o'clock, when the Captain went down to mount his horse, the Judge was waiting for him to take breakfast. That evening there was new repetition of the follies of Balthasar. Lecomte politely asked the fair Elodie to play for him; then, in his turn, the young man was invited to sing. He accepted without hesitation, and he had a superb voice. Next he played one of Mendelssohn's "Songs without Words" with undeniable talent.

A couple of days later, Rabotteau discreetly brought up the subject of officers marrying, and pretended to decry it. Lecomte smiled significantly, and politely opposed his host's theories. He added that during the war

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the married officers had performed their duty better, if possible, than the others.

That night, not a member of the family slept a wink, Elodie least of all.

"Well, it ought to go through this time," Madame Rabotteau declared to her husband, "for according to my calculations, this week has cost us at least four hundred francs."

"You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs," the Judge replied sententiously.

He had secretly written to Tardivel:

Lecomte is charming. He suits us to a T. Is it necessary to give him a hint?

And Tardivel replied:

Pretend to know nothing about it. When he comes back, I will see him. I will manage the whole affair.

However, the last day of the manœuvres had come. That evening, the Rabotteau kitchen was nerved for a supreme effort, destined to all appearances, to be crowned with success. But, alas! at the accustomed hour the Captain's horse was brought back to the stable by his orderly.

Elodie, who was watching for the return of her future husband—they called him so already among themselves—from behind her blinds, flew to the garden and cried out in anguish:

"Merciful heavens! Is he wounded?"

"No, Mademoiselle," replied the orderly, with a peculiar smile. "The Captain's health is *in statu quo*. But you'd better tell your papa not to keep the soup waiting for him."

"Isn't he coming to dinner?"

"No, Mademoiselle; he is going to have dinner at the White Horse Inn, and will sleep there afterwards. I am to fetch his things as soon as I have unsaddled the mare."

Pale as a sheet, Elodie ran to inform her mother.

"Goodness!" cried the latter; "what a pity. That goose cost eight francs! But what is the matter? Shall we ask his orderly?"

"We shall do nothing of the sort, my dear," replied the Judge. "Thanks to the influence of discipline and the guardhouse, these military servants will do anything for their masters. You would learn nothing, and you might spoil everything perhaps. To-morrow I shall make inquiries."

The dinner of the trio was most melancholy.

Early the next day Rabotteau sought out the landlord of the White Horse, who was much flurried by the presence of a dozen officers of all grades.

"Can you tell me," the Judge asked, "if the artillery captain who was quartered at my house—— "

"He is in No. 8, Judge. The Captain is still in his room, for the manœuvres ended last night. Excuse me if I do not take you up myself—I am just worked to death."

Rabotteau ascended the stairs, and strode down the long corridor, on which opened several white doors, all alike except for the large numerals painted on them in black. He was just in the act of knocking at that which bore the figure eight, when suddenly he recoiled as if he had seen a tiger crouching on the mat. It was, by the side of a pair of top boots, still armed with spurs, a little pair of shoes, lined with rose-coloured satin; dainty, elegant, impertinent shoes; shoes of which one would say without fear of being mistaken: "The foot of a pretty woman was in that not long ago."

Yes, but for the time being the pretty woman was—somewhere else. Unhappy Elodie! Poor Madame Rabotteau! Fool of a Tardivel! Shameless monster of a Lecomte!

At that moment the key was heard to turn in the door of No. 8. The door was seen to open timidly, just the least crack. First a hand emerged, very small and very white, the hand that belonged to those shoes. Then the wrist appeared, round and slender, with a pretty bracelet. Then a plump arm, which grew longer and longer. Rabotteau had never in his life seen such an arm as that, and, if the other were like it, as all experience would indicate, this scoundrel of a Lecomte was a very lucky scoundrel indeed.

However, the arm, the wrist, the hand, and the shoes retreated in good order. The door was closed, and the Judge stood there, feeling very foolish, but there was nothing for him to do but to go back to his own house.

"Well?" simultaneously cried the two women, who were waiting for him on the way.

"That Lecomte is a scoundrel," he said between his teeth. "Go to your room, Elodie, I have something to say to your mother."

Then Rabotteau, with shining eyes—from anger, no doubt—recounted to his better half what he had seen.

"Oh!" gasped the good lady, "the idea of such a scandal! This is a pretty example for Saint Colomban! Whatever shall we tell Elodie? Poor child, she really liked the monster! And a pretty fellow is your Tardivel. That reminds me, a letter has just come from him by special courier."

On the table, indeed, the Judge found his missive:

I don't understand this at all. You pretend to have Lecomte there with you. But he writes me that he had broken his leg, and that one of his comrades had taken his place in the manœuvres. Pray send me some word of explanation.

"This is too much!" cried Elodie's mother. "I called him M. Lecomte all the time, and he never denied the name. If I were you, I would write to the Minister of War about it."

"I shall think it over," Rabotteau said. "It is a grave matter to have an officer court-martialed on account of a young man's escapade. Besides, he will not leave, I imagine, without coming to say good-bye, and then we shall see."

Surely enough, that afternoon the false Lecomte knocked at the gate. But—climax of impudence!—on his arm was a young and very pretty woman—doubtless the lady of the shoes.

"Justine!" cried Madame Rabotteau, "do not open the gate! Tell those persons we are not at home." Then, turning to her husband, she added: "Why are you not choking with indignation? Can you stand unmoved in the face of such insult? If I were a man, M. Rabotteau, matters would look very different."

"But, my dear, I am a magistrate, I am sixty-seven years of age, and the manipulation of arms is an unknown art to me."

At that moment Justine returned, carrying a card on which was inscribed:

Le Comte de Prebois,
Capitaine d'Artillerie.

Beneath was written in pencil:

A thousand regrets and a thousand excuses for having missed your company last evening. Madame de Prebois came down and took me by surprise, and did not wish to seem inconsiderate by increasing the trouble my presence has caused you. It would have afforded her great pleasure to make the acquaintance of your wife and daughter. Allow me to express my sincere gratitude for your excellent hospitality.

"I understand now," Madame Rabotteau declared at last, with a profoundly discouraged sigh, after she had read the card through, "why he did not object when we called him, Monsieur le Comte. Poor Elodie. She always was unlucky."

Le Vier.

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THE TREASURES OF THE WHITE GOD.

THE STORY OF A SHAMEFUL CRIME.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Retribution.

Richard Sheldon did not stop at a single victim in his mad resolve for flight. A second time he raised the knife.

It was swept from his grasp, however. In his free hand Detective Dean still retained the pair of handcuffs. He struck out wildly as the merchant bent over him, dealt his knuckles a rap that swept the knife from his grasp, and then struggled frantically to drag himself free from the encumbering form of the senseless Burgoyne and the box.

With a snarl of ferocity, Sheldon drew his revolver. He aimed it point-blank at the face of his prostrate foe, pulled the trigger, and then, not even waiting to note the effect, madly hurled the weapon at Dean, and sprang from the spot.

Clutching the handbag tightly, he ran down the line. The train was gaining speed. It would not stop for two hundred miles again. Dead or alive, he would trust to outwitting Dean by pursuing his journey on the express, at least as far as the next point of halting.

He saw at a glance that he must run and meet the train ere it gained a momentum it would scarcely be safe to defy. He poised himself as the engine dashed by. As soon as the engine and tender had passed him, he would grasp at the door rail of the next passenger carriage.

Thud! Just as the tender rushed by him, a heavy object left the hand of the man in charge of it—a letter bag. It was usual to throw it off here regularly.

It took the unwarned, unprepared Sheldon in the chest. Head over heels he went, the breath fairly knocked out of his body. He landed with a shock that stunned every sense. Then he staggered to his feet, limping, bruised, bleeding, and stared, with a wild malediction, down the smooth lines, to see the flickering red lights of the rear carriage of the express vanishing round a curve, half a mile away.

So vanished hope? No! He reflected eagerly. The Central ran a mile east. There was a train due at the nearest station in an hour; he remembered that. Why not catch it? Without a further thought of Dean or Burgoyne, the fugitive started, as fast as he could run, across an open field, at the extreme end of which he could even now make out the signals.

"What was that?"

He quivered, he glanced apprehensively behind him—half a mile accomplished. The sound of clattering feet on the hard, baked path he had been pursuing.

A great cry of mingled dismay and alarm swept his lips as he strained his eyes to make out a rapidly advancing figure.

"Mercy! it is Dean!"

Yes; the recognition was unmistakable. Even as he gazed, a sharp, peremptory challenge cut the air like a knife.

"Halt!"

The fugitive drew another revolver.

Bang—snap—snap—snap!—three chambers empty—bang—bang!

He threw away the useless weapon, with a cry like that of an environed tiger denuded of its claws. His pursuer must bear a charmed life! Relentless as fate, unscathed, he swept towards the pursued man.

Sheldon ran on. Here, in the open space, it was a question of superior speed. Well, he was no ordinary sprinter! Could he but reach the extensive yards just beyond a bridge spanning a little stream directly in his course, a score of secure hiding-places offered protection.

Half-way across the bridge he came to a dismayed halt. He could hear the breath of the pursuer, sharp, panting, but resolute. A firm hand grasped him.

Like a beast at bay, the fugitive glared at his captor.

"I am armed—no resistance, if you are wise!" sounded the stern voice of Dean. "Give me that bag!"

The bag? Ah! a malevolent and then a hopeful gleam shone in the eyes of the captive.

Liberty was everything. To be imprisoned now meant doom—the forgeries discovered, his own coward course certain to accord with the claims of this intrepid, relentless man-hunter.

"The bag?" he panted hoarsely. "Yes—take it!"

He gave it a sudden fling over the bridge rail, directly into the water beneath.

With an ejaculation of infinite dismay, taken completely off his guard, the detective relaxed his hold of Sheldon.

He saw the swift-rolling waters of the river; he saw that, by sheer accident, the precious handbag had landed on a frail heap of driftwood, that a minute later might float out of sight, or sink. He followed a quick impulse. Over the rail he sprang into the cold dark waters. He splashed, caught at the bag, clung to it, and struck out for the shore.

The temporary respite afforded the fugitive was seized with avidity. He ran on swiftly. It was liberty now—never mind the treasure! Had he not several thousand pounds in his pocket? Life, free, even with that niggardly portion, was better than a prison cell and nothing.

Ah! the yard at last!—network and wilderness of rails, ties, engines and carriages. A hundred safe places of concealment offered; numberless trains passed the vicinity nightly.

He looked back. Possession of the treasure and a cold bath had apparently dampened the ardour of Detective Dean, for he was nowhere in sight.

The fugitive was breathless, nearly exhausted from his violent run. A bitter smile crossed his pale face as he realised, pantingly, that he was no longer a young man. His prime had been reached through fast living; his keen craftiness had been blunted by recent blunders.

A sharp pain near the heart caused him to press his hand there. He winced, gasped a trifle harder, and then sat down upon a pile of iron.

"I've overtaxed myself," he muttered, with concern. "The run, the excitement, have been too much for me. Dr. Ridgely said I must be careful. Only a few paltry thousands, after all my scheming!"

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A grim, sullen look came into his pain-stricken eyes as he drew forth a pocket-book and opened it, to be sure of its contents. The glare of a danger lamp turned a flood of a lurid hue across his face at that moment and made it look ghastly.

At that moment, too, a second spasm of pain gripped his heart. He sank back sideways on the heap to ease the contraction of the tense muscles, and then reached forth his hand to take up the pocket-book which had fallen from his grasp.

"Hello! I don't like this!"

His face, bloodless, and alarmed now, the fugitive plotter thrilled as his arm refused to do his bidding. It was becoming nerveless. A deadening numbness, too, had crept up one side, and the muscles of his mouth began to twitch.

"It's just the reaction from excitement! I must rouse myself!" he muttered.

A groan parted his lips. A strange, dull throbbing began to pervade his brain; little thrills of alternate chill and heat traversed his nerves, and then——

Foaming at the mouth, he tried to shout for help, but the utterance click-clacked down in his throat. His hands spread out in fan-shape rigidity as he essayed to rise. An awful shock, as of some mighty concussion, jarred every nerve; then, like a blight, like a breath, a fearful convulsion sent him huddled to a helpless heap.

Helpless in the hour of triumph—stricken down at the moment of safety! His money lay, of no avail, at his side.

What had happened? His brain became more active, as his frame grew more sodden, death-like, rigid.

The fixed, awful eyes told the story—the limp limbs revealed the truth. In the height of wicked victory and soulless flight from the wrongs he had done others, it had come——

The hand of Heaven—paralysis!

CHAPTER XXXV.

At Eventide—Light.

Adrian Burgoyne had been desperately wounded by the knife-thrust of the fugitive man.

The detective had managed to push his encumbering body aside and get free of the heavy box. Then he had to run to the station-master's office, utter a hurried injunction to him to care for the wounded man, and had started on the track of Sheldon.

But, amid the bustle of the arriving train, the station-master lost several minutes. When he reached the corner of the sanguinary encounter, Burgoyne had disappeared.

In later hours, Convict 407 could never trace his movements of that fateful evening, nor analyse the false strength that enabled him to wander for miles.

The flow of blood had ceased, but the shock had sent a fierce delirium to his brain. He must have staggered from the lines, reached a street near by, and, with one thought supreme in his mind, groped his way back towards the city.

Patrice! Her name alone haunted his fevered lips. Sheldon, the treasure, the detective, were all in the remote background now. Patrice—ever Patrice—only Patrice!

Men whom he met stared, startled at his dabbled attire, at his white face, his wild eyes. One pedestrian consented to examine the paper, bloodstained and outspread, which Burgoyne presented.

It was the order to release "the niece of Richard Sheldon." It bore the address of the institution.

The man directed him. Talking to himself, laughing, scowling, murmuring soft, sentimental nothings one moment, the next growing tragic over some more dramatic phase of his lightning-like thoughts, the wounded wayfarer reeled forward on his way.

Utter delirium was regnant now, save for that one coherent idea—Patrice. It was two hours after leaving the station that Burgoyne came to his journey's end. He had staggered down a narrow, tree-lined street. Only the pale moonlight, filtering through the leaves, illuminated the spot, showing a high brick wall, without a break, until he came to a stout oaken door set in the solid masonry.

Upon the step of this he sank. Not a soul was in sight. Only the distant hum of the city's turmoil haunted the still, evening air.

His senses were swaying, his wound had broken out afresh. The loss of new, hot blood cooled the fevered pulses for the moment. A flush of reality, a transient conception of his condition, flashed over Burgoyne's mind.

As he realised his situation, his peril, his weakness, he essayed to rise. He managed to gain his feet by crowding into the niche formed by the set-in gate. Upon it he knocked.

"Open—help!" he murmured faintly, with no idea of what the gate might lead to.

There was a click as he continued his knocking. He had loosened a little wicket in the centre of the gate. It slipped down.

A hundred sweet perfumes crossed his senses. Through the aperture his fever-driven eyes caught a glimpse of the swaying trees and bushes of a garden. What was the place? Was not that a form moving among the shrubbery?

To sustain himself, he thrust his arm through the wicket. There he clung, his arm bared by grazing the aperture, Richard Sheldon's bloodstained order still fluttering in his hand.

"Help! I am wounded—dying——"

"What is this? Sister Ursula, something has happened! Quick, this way!"

That voice! Was he dreaming, delirious again?

"It is a man. He has a bloodstained paper in his hand. Sister, what does it mean? Adrian! The tattooed arm! Oh! am I dreaming—mad?"

That voice! *Her* voice! Clinging to the wicket, limp, broken, dying, like a tempest-tossed mariner to a rock of safety, the stricken Adrian Burgoyne knew that a soft, anguished touch caressed his hand—knew that by accident, circumstance, fate, he had found his missing love—smiled once in joy delirious, and then mind and heart floated into the mysterious dreamland of insensibility.

* * * * *

One day! ten!—how much older was the world than the night he so nearly met his fate, he knew not, as he opened his eyes to life and light and love again.

He lay upon a soft couch in a pleasant room; balmy zephyrs swept through its open windows; at his side hovered an angel.

"Patrice!"

Down upon her knees beside him, sobbing, laughing, crying, sank the wrapt, anxious nurse.

"Oh! you are better; you will live! Adrian—you know me?"

"What does it mean—where am I?"

Soft as the whispering cadence of a summer zephyr came the words in reply. Her eyes riveted upon his face, Patrice Ringold told how fate had sent him to the reformatory, how he had been taken in and cared for by the kind-hearted sisters, how she had been his nurse.

"Dean—does he know? Is he still alive?" quivered Burgoyne anxiously.

"He has been here daily. Oh! there is so much to tell. Do not become excited dear! You shall know all in time, only—oh! my brave, loyal friend, he even has crowned your heroic endeavours with blessings. What most in the world would please you, encourage you, hasten your recovery?"

"Your love!" sighed the ardent patient.

"That is yours to the end of time," murmured the blushing Patrice. "But here is something more practical.

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Shut your eyes, dear! Open your eyes, dear! and—look!"

Her own sparkled like diamonds as she fluttered a paper before his vision.

"What is it?" asked Adrian Burgoyne faintly.

"Read and see—*a pardon!*"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The End of a Long Chase.

OFFICIAL REPORT.

DEPARTMENT OF POLICE.

1st District: 4th Precinct. Police Station: Central Headquarters.

Evidences of Crime.

Documents—Affidavits. Recovered Property.

Appended a medico-legal report.

In the case of Richard Sheldon, I have to report, in addition to previous disclosures, the death of the accused, and the final establishment of the innocence of Convict 407, Adrian Burgoyne.

Every detail of the plots of Sheldon have already been forwarded you. They form the story of the wrongs perpetrated against an innocent man—Adrian Burgoyne. They prove the deep villainy of the man Sheldon.

This man was found paralysed near the scene of his attempted murder. He was conveyed, helpless, to the city hospital, and died there yesterday, after reluctantly affixing his signature to the inclosed confession, which, with the certificate of the attending physician, I forward you.

It now only remains for justice to rehabilitate Adrian Burgoyne and establish Miss Patrice Ringold in her rights as owner of the treasure and moneys wrested from Sheldon. The private detective, Davenant, I find innocent of any conjunction in Sheldon's plots. He, furthermore, revealed to me the whereabouts of Miss Ringold, who is now nursing the man who imperilled his life to shield my own.

I have this day placed in her hands a full and complete pardon from the Governor of the State, for Adrian Burgoyne. This was secured upon the presentation to His Excellency of papers she had secretly abstracted from the desk of Colonel Lytle. They prove the plot to connect Burgoyne with the anarchist murder, they fully and completely verify my claims as to his entire innocence.

In closing the case, sir, I thank you for the expressions of confidence and commendation your last communication offers me.

(Signed) Berwyn L. Dean, *Detective.*

Upon reading this final and informal report of his subordinate, the chief of the service, Grey, sent for Dean.

"You have made a mistake in your report, Dean," he announced.

"Eh! how?" murmured the other, bewildered.

"There is a correction to be made in the signature. There. That reads better!"

The chief drew a pencil across the report as he spoke. Then he tossed it to his subordinate.

And the flushed and delighted officer, who had been true to his employers, and true to himself, read the gratifying chronicle of merit rewarded, of promotion and esteem—"Berwyn L. Dean, *Inspector.*"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The World's Fair Mystery.

The city of Chicago was mad with delight, riotous with excitement, aglow with bright faces, flags, banners and transparencies.

Four hundred years had woven the slow-filling warp and woof of progress with steady unfaltering fingers, and the wilderness Columbus had descried from the deck of his beleaguered ship, rang from ocean to ocean with commemorative cheers.

The great World's Fair was ready to spread its rare treasures of art, science and industry to the view of pilgrims from the four corners of the earth.

In a safe corner of one of its massive buildings had been stored a curio, around which romance and tragedy had woven a mystery that endowed it with more than ordinary interest in the eyes of the curious public.

It was the White God — Richard Sheldon's gift to the Columbian Exposition.

The story of that idol had filled the papers, had been discussed by every lip, had, as well, involved the romance of the pardoned convict and heiress orphan.

Thousands had begged for a sight of it; but in vain. It was announced that it would only be publicly seen when the Mexican exhibit was complete and in place.

That promise, however, was never fulfilled, and one morning the World's Fair officials awoke to confront a mighty surprise, a bewildering mystery.

The White God was gone!

The puzzled detectives who haunted the grounds after the discovery of this daring theft, looked wise, but said nothing, did nothing, for the abstraction of the idol had been the work of too deft a hand that a single clue to the bold depredator should be discovered.

The thief had evaded the guards on duty. He had climbed a ladder to the roof of the building in which the idol was housed.

With extraordinary patience, he had swung from girder to girder, had attached a rope to the idol, swung it aloft, laboriously dragged it four hundred feet across the net-work of iron beams, and, taking his life in his hands, had lowered it and himself over the sheer edge of the rotunda to the ground below.

Then the audacious marauder and the White God disappeared.

Mr. Inspector Dean looked grim when he heard of it. He thought of Medeiras and his vengeance, and said nothing.

Somewhat later, a friend from Mexico described to him a great Aztec festival he had witnessed at the cave of Bureldo.

The high priest in charge of the ceremonies he described. It was Medeiras. The festivities marked the return to its rifled shrine of the famous White God.

And in its gleaming brow there glittered and shone the yellow sun-jewel wrested from the possession of dead Colonel Lytle in the moment of the dread vengeance of the relentless devotee of the White God.

* * * * * * *

Moonlight on the water, one great glare of electric radiance on the land—a placid lake, a park of green; domes, spires and minarets—a picture of fairyland enchantment—the great World's Fair at Chicago!

From the deck of a stately steamer on the lake, their hands clasped, their eyes sentient with glowing thoughts, two congenial souls watched all this magnificence.

In silence! The scene was too vivid with memories of the past, too eloquent with suggestions of the future, to admit of commonplace discussion.

Here, these two, the Englishman, Adrian Burgoyne and Patrice, his wife, had been fated by destiny to find the starting-point in their career, that had led them, surely, inevitably, through deep waters, to the sure sunlight of later happiness.

Here the long chase had begun; here it ended. Thousands from every land would view the majestic scene, wonder-eyed, entranced by its material splendour, but, to that devoted two, the thought of the dash for liberty, of the hunted fugitive, of the wild flames of the burning barge, of the reckless spring into the bubbling billows, of Convict 407, another night like this in the long-ago, sanctified the spot with memories that would continue while life endured.

From that peril, darkness, gloom and wretchedness had been evolved security, light, joy and bliss.

Heaven was kind—Heaven was just! and the man who had never lost his faith, who had battled every dark demon of despair with trust and courage supreme, as he clasped the hand of Patrice, faithful, bonny Patrice, felt that the love he had won was as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land!

The End.

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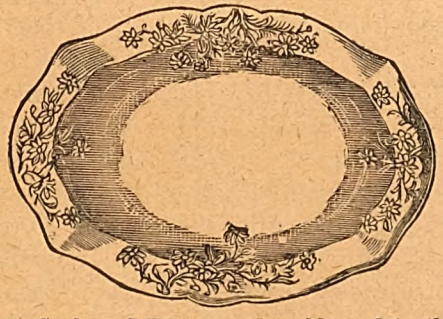

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A Gentleman who cured himself of Deafness and Noises in the Head after fourteen years' suffering, will gladly send full particulars of the remedy post free.—Address, H. CLIFTON, Amberley House, Norfolk Street, Strand, London, W.C.

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Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

WE MUST HAVE THE TOOLS.

Robinson Crusoe, you remember, made a big boat or canoe out of the trunk of a tree. It was a laborious and tedious job. And that wasn't the worst of it. When he got the boat done he couldn't launch it. It was too heavy for one man to handle. If he had only had an arrangement like the capstan of a ship he might have managed. He *understood* how to do it, but lacked the tools. How often we find ourselves at a dead stand for that same reason. Let me give you a fresh illustration, tied up for the moment in the following letter, which must first be read before we can rightly come at the point.

"In the spring of 1884," says our correspondent, "I got into a low, weak way, not being able to imagine what had happened to me. My strength kept ebbing away till I had scarcely the desire or ability to do anything. I felt as tired as if I had just arrived home from a long, hard journey, yet no tax more than usual of any kind had been laid upon me. My mind, too, was weary; so that I turned from things that obliged me to think, plan, or consider.

"Side by side, so to speak, with all this was the failure of my appetite. Of course I continued to eat, or make an effort to eat, but food no longer tempted me as it does a person in health. I picked and minced over my meals, and the little I took neither tasted good nor did me any good after I had eaten it. Instead of warming, comforting and stimulating me, as it used to do, it gave me distress at the stomach, pain at the chest, and a singular feeling of tightness around the waist, as though a belt were buckled too snug around me.

"After a time the condition of my stomach seemed to grow worse. There was that sense of gnawing, so often mentioned by others, and occasionally a feeling of faintness and sinking, almost like the ground giving way under one's feet."

[Remark: An eminent London physician, in one of his books, describes this sinking feeling as one of the most appalling and frightful that it is possible to experience. It is not the body but the *mind* that suffers. I, the present writer, have had two attacks of it, and pray to have no more. It is like unto the overshadowing of the Death Angel's wing, *with the mind fully conscious of the situation.* The *cause* is uric acid poison in the blood, one of the products of prolonged indigestion.]

"When this sinking feeling came on," continues the letter, "it weighed me down like a nightmare. Finally I got to be so weak I could only walk slowly and feebly. *The doctor who prescribed for me said my complaint was dyspepsia,* but his medicine had no perceptible effect.

"I continued like this for eight years; not always the same, but now better and then worse. Yet in all that long time there was not a day when I could say I was well. No medicine or treatment seemed right for me, and I almost began to think I never should recover my former health.

"In March, 1892, Mother Seigel's Syrup was recommended to me as having done wonders in cases like mine, even when they were of long standing and everything else had failed. No harm to try it, we thought, and got a bottle from Mr. Grime, the chemist, in Bolton Road; and after taking it I felt great relief. My appetite quickly improved and I could eat without pain. When I had taken two or three bottles more the bad symptoms had all gone, and I was as well as ever. My husband also took the medicine with the same good results. You may publish my letter and refer inquiries to me. (Signed) (Mrs.) Elizabeth Wilson, 5, Northcote Street, Bolton Road, Darwen, March 1st, 1895."

The lesson in this interesting narrative is too plain for us to miss it. Our old friend Crusoe was not able to launch his boat for the want of machinery. Similarly the doctor who attended Mrs. Wilson was not able to cure her because he did not possess the right remedy. His opinion as to her complaint was entirely correct. She was suffering from chronic dyspepsia, precisely as he told her. But alas! it is one thing to know what ought to be done and quite another to have the knowledge and means to do it.

Between these two things (over this wide gap) stands Mother Seigel's Syrup, just as between the two sides of the Thames stands London Bridge.

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NEW SERIAL BEGINS THIS WEEK.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 376. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 14TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

1896 PROCLAMATION.

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OUR NEW VENTURE! Yes, Two Different Pattern Hearthrugs or Carpets for the Price of One! (Copyright).

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Reversible, with a different pattern on both sides, woven throughout with handsome border to correspond; richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. Made in 10 sizes only. These carpets are the production of much care, labour, and forethought, and are made in handsome and elaborate patterns (which are protected by registration). They combine the rich blended colours of the Turkish and Persian with the elegant designs of the Wilton. These goods cannot be distinguished from real Brussels when laid down, and cannot be excelled in durability.

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The Dowr. Lady Abercromby is pleased with the 'Prudential' Carpet she ordered."

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Suitable for Sitting-room or Bedroom, Bordered and Woven in Art Colours, large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any Middle Profits. Remember these are Woven, not printed, and are made of a material almost equal to Wool. Thousands of these Carpets and Rugs have already been sold at almost double above prices. A Rug sent with Carpet. 10d. extra.

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On receipt of this Coupon and P.O.O. or Stamps for amount, we guarantee to send goods as above to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. Cash returned in full if not satisfied.

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Price complete only 10/6, safely packed and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra.

Sizes in stock fit any figure up to 38ins. round bust under arms, skirts being 38, 40, and 42 ins. long in front; larger or special sizes made to measure, 1/6 extra.

THE JOHN NOBLE

COSTUMES FOR YOUNG MISSES

are made in the John Noble Cheviot Serge, and trimmed military braid as illustration. A large box-pleat down the centre of the lined bodice, and a fancy pocket at each side of the skirt, complete a charming design at these prices: FROM 8/6

Lengths	35	38	42	46	50 inches.
Prices	8/6	9/6	10/9	12/-	13/6 each.

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KNOCKABOUT FROCKS FOR GIRLS are also supplied in the John Noble Cheviot Serge, with saddle top, long full sleeves, and pocket, at following prices: FROM 1/6

Lengths	21	24	27	30	33	36	39	42	45 ins.
Prices	1/6	2/-	2/6	3/-	3/6	4/-	4/6	5/-	5/6 ea.

Postage 4½d. extra. Lengths stated above are from top of neckband to bottom of skirt in front.

COLOURS: Any of the above garments can be supplied in Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Bronze Green, Electric Blue, Ruby, Dark Cinnamon, Fawn, or Grey.

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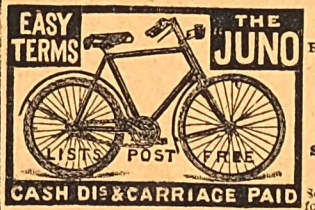

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No. II

Mar. 14, 1896.

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If so, wear the "A 1" Invisible Elevators (Regd.). Will increase your height up to four inches; the only approved means; detection impossible; simple, inexpensive. Send stamped envelope for particulars to the ORIENTAL TOILET CO. (B 6 Dept.), 67, Strand, London.

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Free of all cost, Hosiery, Dress Skirts, Printed Blouses, and Complete Dress Lengths. Every woman should write for particulars and the most Marvellous Dress Guide, which are sent free on receipt of a Post Card. ADDRESS: Shakespeare Manufacturing Co. (Dept. 19), Milk St., Manchester.

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A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs. "T. D." 67 Strand, London.

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SHORT STORIES

LOVE ADVENTURE ROMANCE WAR HUMOUR PATHOS

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 376.] For the Week ending March 14th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

THE PRISONER OF WAR.

Translated from the Spanish.

"DON BASILIO, play us a tune on the cornet, and we will dance. It is cool here under the trees."

"Yes, yes, Don Basilio, play something."

"Bring him the cornet Joaquin is practising with."

"It is not a very good one, but you'll play for us, will you not, Don Basilio?"

"No."

"You won't?"

"No."

"But why?"

"Because I don't know how."

"He doesn't know how! Did you ever see such a hypocrite?"

"Come, come, Don Basilio. Why, we know you've been leader of a military band."

"And that nobody could play the cornet like yourself."

"And that you have a pension from the government."

"Well, yes, it's truth. I have been a musician in my time, and the cornet was the instrument I played; but it is also true that years ago I gave my cornet away to a poor player in need of one, and since that time have not so much as hummed a tune."

"What a pity!"

"Oh, but this afternoon you must play for us."

"Remember it is my birthday, grandpapa."

"And here is the cornet at last."

"Now let's have a pretty tune."

"A waltz?"

"No, a polka!"

"No, no; a fandango, a fandango—our national dance."

"Don't bother me, children. Have I not said that I cannot play?"

"But why can't you?"

All rights reserved.]

"Because I've forgotten the way, and because, moreover, I have vowed never to learn again."

"To whom did you make this vow, father?"

"To myself, to a dead friend, and to your poor mother, my daughter."

All the bright, childish faces grew sad upon hearing these words.

"Oh, if you only knew at what cost I learnt to play the cornet!" continued the old man.

"The story! the story!" exclaimed the children. "Tell us a story."

"Well, yes," said Don Basilio, "it is really a story worth telling. Listen, and you shall judge for yourselves whether I can or cannot play for you to-day."

And seating himself under a tree, surrounded by the wondering children, he told them the story of how he learnt to play the cornet. Let us listen to Don Basilio.

* * * * *

It is now seventeen years ago that our beloved Spain was shaken by civil war. Carlos and Isabel disputed the crown, and our countrymen, divided into two factions, shed their blood in fratricidal conflict.

I had in those days a friend named Ramon Gomez, cavalry lieutenant in the same battalion, one of the best hearted fellows I have ever known. We were educated together; together we left college; together had we passed many happy days, and together we were ready to die for liberty. Oh, I can truly say that he was more attached to the Liberal cause than any of us, and his loyalty was never questioned. Yet, even so, a certain injustice committed by our chief, one of those abuses of authority that wreck the most honourable career, made the cavalry lieutenant desert the ranks of his fellow soldiers, the friend leave his friend, the Liberal abandon

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his cause for that of a hated faction, the subordinate desire to kill his superior officer.

Neither my warnings nor my intreaties availed to dissuade him from this rash step. It was a thing decided. He would change the helmet for the cap, despising, as he did, the rebels and their cause.

At that time we found ourselves in the principality of L——, three miles from the enemy. It was the night in which Ramon was to desert—a cheerless evening, cold and wet, on the eve of a battle. At midnight Ramon entered my tent. I was asleep.

"Basilio," he whispered in my ear.

"Who's there?" I asked, waking with a start.

"It is I. Good-bye."

"You are going already?"

"Yes. Good-bye." And he grasped my hand. "Listen," he continued. "If to-morrow there is a great battle, as is the rumour, and we come face to face in it——"

"I know, I know," I interrupted. "We are friends."

"Good. We clasp hands, and fight afterwards. I shall die to-morrow surely, but not until I have fought my way to the side of the lieutenant-colonel. As for you, Basilio, do not expose yourself."

"Glory is but a vapour."

"And life?"

"Well said. Make yourself a commandant. The pay is not ethereal—that is, not till one has smoked it away. Ah, but all that has now ended for me."

"What melancholy thoughts!" I cried, not without a sinking at the heart. "To-morrow we shall survive the battle."

"Well, if this be so, let us now appoint a meeting place."

"Where?"

"In the hermitage of St. Nicholas at one o'clock to-morrow night. He who is not there by that time shall be given up for dead by the other. Is it agreed?"

"Agreed."

"Well, then, good-bye."

"Good-bye."

We embraced affectionately and parted, Ramon disappearing under shelter of the darkness.

* * * * *

As we had expected, the rebels attacked us the following day. The action was a bloody one, and lasted from three o'clock in the afternoon until nightfall. About five o'clock my battalion was roughly set upon by a party of Alaveses led by Ramon. He then wore the uniform and decorations of a commandant, and on his head was the white cap of the Carlists. I ordered my company to fire upon Ramon's forces. He retaliated, and soon our battalions were engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle. We were victorious, and Ramon was forced to retreat with the scattered remnants of his band, not, however, before he had slain with his own hand our lieutenant-colonel, who opposed a desperate but vain resistance to the fury of his antagonist.

Towards sunset the fortunes of war turned against us, and part of my unfortunate company was, with myself, cut off from the main body and forced to surrender. I was taken prisoner to the little village of——, which the Carlists occupied, and as the war was without quarter on their side I expected to be immediately put to death.

While confined, disheartened and weary, in the gaol I heard the hour of one ring out, the time for my meeting with Ramon. I asked for my friend, and was told: "He is a hero—killed a lieutenant-colonel with his own hand—but he must undoubtedly have perished in the last hours of battle."

"Why do you think so?" I asked.

"Because he has not yet come back to camp, and those he commanded can give no account of him."

Oh! what I suffered that night. But one hope remained to comfort me—that Ramon was still awaiting me at the hermitage, and for this reason had not returned. "How troubled he will be when he finds I do not come!" I said to myself. "He will believe me dead, and, indeed, am I very far from being so? My last hour cannot now be far distant." At daybreak a chaplain entered the prison. My companions in misery were sleeping.

"Death?" I exclaimed upon seeing the priest.

"Yes," he replied softly.

"Now?" I asked.

"No; within three hours."

A few minutes later my fellow prisoners had awakened. Sobs, cries, and blasphemies filled the prison.

Every man about to die usually has one idea that is ever present in his thoughts and to which he clings. So it was with me, and weakness, fever, or madness, I know not which, filled my mind with thoughts of my friend—of Ramon living, of Ramon dead, of Ramon waiting for me in the hermitage, of Ramon waiting for me in Heaven—and so powerfully had those ideas taken possession of my mind that I thought of nothing else during those hours of agony.

They took off my captain's uniform and wrapped me in an old soldier's cloak, placing upon my head the Carlist cap. Thus I marched to my death with my nineteen companions in misery. One only had been pardoned, and this because he was a musician. The Carlists at that time spared the lives of all musicians on account of there being a great scarcity of them in their battalions.

"And were you a musician, Don Basilio? Did you save yourself by that?" exclaimed his hearers with one breath.

"No, my children," responded the veteran. "I then knew nothing of music."

Well, the execution squad drew up in line, and we were placed facing it. I was No. 11 in the row—that is to say, I should be the eleventh to die. Then I thought of my wife and child—of you and your poor mother, my daughter.

The firing began. Those awful death volleys maddened me. As my eyes were bandaged, I could not see my companions fall one by one. I wished to count the discharges, so as to be able to prepare myself for the last moment, but at the third or fourth volley I lost count.

Oh, the echo of those shots will reverberate in my heart and brain for ever as they rang out that fatal day! At one moment they were a thousand leagues away; the next, their thunder seemed to peal within my very ear. And the volley continued.

"Now!" I thought. The sharp report followed, and I was still alive.

"This will be it," I said, and then I felt myself seized by the shoulder, and dragged out of the ranks, while voices sounded in my ears.

I fell unconscious to the ground, the last thought that passed through my mind being that I had been shot and was dying.

Afterwards it seemed to me that I was lying stretched on my prison cot. I half raised myself and looked around me, trying to pierce the darkness with my eyes. A shadow more obscure than the others appeared to

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detach itself and bend over me. It had the outline of a man.

My lips murmured mechanically the name of him who had been so much in my thoughts.

"Ramon!"

"What is it?" replied the shadow.

I shuddered. "My God!" I exclaimed. "Can I be in the other world?"

"No," replied the same voice.

"Ramon—you still live?"

"Yes."

"And I——"

"Also."

"Where am I? This is not the hermitage of St. Nicholas, and I still live a prisoner, or has it all been a dream?"

"No, Basilio, you have not been dreaming. Listen!

"As you know, yesterday I killed the lieutenant-colonel in fair fight. Afterwards, mad with the excitement of the battle, I went on fighting desperately until the close of the action. Then as the moon rose, I thought of you and of our appointment, and directed my steps to the old hermitage, with the intention of awaiting you there. It was about ten o'clock when I arrived, so, as the hour agreed upon was one, I lay down to sleep. At the stroke of one I awoke with a start to find myself alone. Two, three, four, the hours rang out, and still you did not come. Without doubt, I said to myself, he is dead, and with a heavy heart I set out at daybreak for the rebel camp. All had given me up for lost, so I was received with joy, and the General showered distinction upon me.

"Afterwards I learnt that some prisoners were to be executed that morning. A presentiment filled my mind. 'Can Basilio be among them?' I thought. I ran towards the place of execution. The soldiers of the firing squadron had already taken their position. I heard the report of the rifles as they rang out in volleys on the still morning air.

"At length I reach the scene, and look rapidly along the line of victims, but can see nothing. Anguish blinds me; fear unnerves me. Then I distinguish you but two places removed from that of death! What is to be done? I go mad, give a shout, break through the line of soldiers, and rush to your side, and flinging my arms around you, exclaimed hoarsely:

"'This one—no! This one—no, my general!'

"The general who was in charge of the execution, and who knew me so favourably by my behaviour in the previous day's battle, asked curiously:

"'Why? Is he a musician?'

"That word was for me what it would be for a man born blind to suddenly see the sun in all its splendour. The light of hope fell on my eyes and dazzled them.

"'Musician!' I cried. 'Yes, yes, my general. A musician—a great musician!'

"'What instrument does he play?' inquired the General.

"'The—the—er—that is—why, of course, the cornet! He plays the cornet.'

"'Are we in need of a cornet player?' said he, turning to the leader of the band. Five seconds—five eternities, before the answer came:

"'Yes, General; one is needed.'

"'Well, then,' continued the General, 'remove that man from the ranks, and let the executions proceed at once.'

"Then I caught you in my arms and brought you here."

Scarcely had Ramon ceased speaking when I arose, trembling, and between laughter and tears embraced him, saying:

"I owe my life to you."

"Hardly that," replied Ramon.

"What do you mean?" I exclaimed.

"Can you play the cornet?" he asked.

"No."

"Then you do not owe me your life; rather it is that I have compromised my own safety without securing yours."

I felt my heart grow cold within me.

"And music," he continued, "do you know anything of that?"

"Very little. You will remember what they taught us in college."

"Little, indeed, or, better said, nothing," replied Ramon; "you will die, without the slightest doubt, and I also as a traitor. Just think of that! In fifteen days the band to which you belong is to be organised."

"Fifteen days!"

"Neither more nor less. And as you will not be able to take your place in it (for God will not work a miracle) we shall both be shot."

"To put you to death!" I cried. "You, for my sake—for me, whom you have risked your life to save! Ah, heaven will not permit it! Within fifteen days I shall learn to play the cornet!"

Ramon burst into a laugh.

What more shall I say, my children? In fifteen days—oh, power of the human will—in fifteen days, with their fifteen nights—for I slept no more than nature compelled in half a month—in fifteen days I had learned to play the cornet.

What days those were! Ramon and I left camp early each morning and passed hours with a musician who came from a neighbouring village to teach me.

Escape! I can read this thought in your eyes. Ah, nothing more impossible. I was a prisoner. They never relaxed their vigilance, and Ramon did not wish to escape without me.

It seems to me now as if in all that time I could neither eat nor sleep nor think of aught save my cornet. I was insane, and music was my monomania.

I was resolved to learn, and I did. And if I had been dumb I should have spoken; and paralytic, I should have walked; and blind, should have seen—because I willed it.

Oh! the will answers for all. Resolution is power. Children, learn this great truth—to will is to achieve.

I saved thus my life and that of my friend. But I went mad, and my madness was the art I had learned. It might be said that in three years the cornet never left my hand. Do—re—mi—fa—sol—la—si—behold my world during that time.

But Ramon did not abandon me. Together we emigrated to France, and there I continued my playing. The cornet was myself—it seemed to ring in my mouth.

The people, the notabilities in the art, all gathered to hear me. It was a wonder, a marvel. The cornet seemed to yield to my fingers, it became elastic, it moaned, it wept, it cried aloud, it imitated the birds, the wild beasts, the human sob.

Thus passed two years more. At the end of that time Ramon died. Gazing upon my friend's dead body I recovered my reason, and when, then in my right mind, I one day took up the cornet and tried to play, I found to my astonishment that the power had left me.

Will you now ask me to play a tune for your dance?

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THE TIN BOX.

Henry Dyson was alone in the little office at the back end of his shop.

Mr. Dyson was a pleasant-looking man of about thirty-five or forty, and his fellow townsmen frequently pointed to him with pride as a self-made business man.

But while everybody had a good word for Henry Dyson, very few people spoke well of his brother Tom.

On the night our story opens the merchant was waiting for his graceless brother, and as the hours rolled on the frown on his face grew deeper.

"I can do nothing with Tom," he said, as he paced the floor impatiently. "I have given him every possible chance, but he grows more idle and dissipated every day. Perhaps I ought not to wait for him, but he was so urgent in his request for an interview to-night that I could not refuse. Poor fellow! What new trouble can he be mixed up in?"

The front door opened and a young man entered quietly, and after a furtive glance round the shop proceeded to the office.

"Well, Tom?" said Henry Dyson.

"I am here, you see," replied Tom.

"I suppose," said Henry, "that it is useless to ask why you are so late, or where you have been during the last two days?"

Tom looked a little nervous, and his eyes fell.

"That is neither here nor there," he answered in a swaggering way. "I have had some business of my own to look after, and I knew that you were not short of help in the shop."

"Well, what is it?" asked Henry abruptly.

"Brother," Tom broke out hurriedly and in a faltering voice, "I must have some money, fifty pounds or so."

"I wonder where you will get it," Henry rejoined. "You will not get another penny from me—that is certain. Why should I toil here and economise in order to furnish you with funds to be lost at the gaming table?"

"If I do not get this money," said Tom, turning very pale, "I shall have to leave the country."

"A good thing for the country, then," snapped Henry. "Don't let me interfere with your travelling plans."

Tom seemed to fall all to pieces at this reply. He made one more effort.

"I hope you are not hard up yourself?" he said.

"I was never getting along better," responded the merchant, "but that has nothing to do with the case."

He pulled open the door of the iron safe and pointed to a little tin box.

"Do you see that?" he asked. "Well that box contains twenty crisp £100 bank-notes. I drew the money from the bank to-day for an investment. No, Tom, I am prospering, but I am tired of your endless drain upon my purse. It must stop, and now is the time."

Henry rose from his chair, and went into a little closet for his overcoat.

In an instant, before a man could count three seconds, Tom had drawn the flat tin box from the safe, and slipped it into the breast of his heavy overcoat.

His brother slowly emerged from the closet and put on his overcoat. Then he closed the door of the safe with a click.

"I am ready to go," he said. "You have no further business with me, I presume?"

"No, sir," Tom responded, with a pale, determined face. "Neither now nor later; good-bye."

"Good-bye, old fellow," said Henry with a yawn.

Tom walked out of the shop without another word, banging the door after him.

"I know him," soliloquised the merchant. "He will not leave here. He will be here to-morrow, with a new proposition. Perhaps, after all, I had better look into his affairs, and give him another chance."

He walked slowly out of the building and locked the door. A glance up and down the street showed him that Tom was not in sight, and he then quietly made his way to his home, and straightway went to bed.

After leaving the shop Tom hugged the tin box to his breast, and walked at a rapid pace.

"It was an awful thing to do," he muttered, "but I had to have money, and I worked to make some of it."

The young man sped onwards through the deserted streets until he reached the river. He crossed the bridge and started up the hill on the other side.

His plan was plain enough. He was going to a suburban railway station to take the train for Southampton.

Suddenly he pulled up with a jerk. He took the tin box from under his coat.

"Hang it!" he exclaimed. "I must have been mad. I am no thief, and I will cut my throat before I will become one. There is but one thing to do. I will

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take the box back to my brother, confess my folly, and then leave him."

He turned and retraced his steps. When he reached the bridge he paused a moment, and looked over into the dark waters below.

"I may find peace there," he said gloomily.

He leant over the railing, and listened to the swift rolling current.

"My God!" he cried. "The box—the box!"

It had slipped through his fingers, and already the rushing waters were carrying it to the sea.

Tom ran in the direction of his brother's house, and then wheeled about and ran back to the bridge. His first impulse was to throw himself into the river.

"I am a fool!" he cried. "Suicide will not restore the money. I must be a man now if there is any manhood in me!"

Across the river and over the hill into the thick darkness of the night the guilty fugitive fled. Mile after mile he walked like a madman. The lights of the city disappeared from view, and Tom found himself wandering in an unfamiliar locality.

Again the river came in sight, and the wretched man decided to follow its course. It was not far to the sea. He would go on to the nearest port and ship as a sailor. Anything to get beyond his brother's reach and the eyes of those who knew him.

Thus the light of day found him, but it was not likely that anyone along the river side would recognise him. There were few dwellings, and the people he met were farmers, who were not disposed to be unpleasantly inquisitive.

So the half-crazed man rushed on through the day, till at nightfall he limped wearily into a small seaport town.

* * * * * *

Henry Dyson made every effort to find his missing brother. When he thought of the pained look in Tom's eyes the night the poor fellow left, he reproached himself for allowing him to go away without a kind word of encouragement.

The detectives took the matter up, and the newspapers published an account of Tom's mysterious disappearance. But it was all of no avail. There was no trace, no clue, and after a year or two the merchant came to the conclusion that his brother was a dead man.

Henry Dyson continued to prosper. He married happily, and in the course of time little children came to make his home still brighter.

Twenty years had rolled away, when one night the merchant found himself alone in his office writing a letter.

As he leant back in his chair to take a moment's rest, he thought of the night a score of years before when Tom had visited him there to make a last appeal. Tears came into the rich man's eyes.

"He was my own brother," he sobbed, "and I acted like a brute. How easy it would have been for me to have paid his little debts. Then I could have watched over him, and in time my love would have touched his heart, and he would have turned out all right. But it is too late now to think of those days."

The door opened with hardly a creak, and the merchant would not have known it but for the rush of cool air. He rose from his chair just in time to greet a visitor who walked into the office without even a knock on the door to herald his approach.

Henry Dyson looked upon him in speechless astonishment. If he could trust his eyes this was Tom Dyson, but not the Tom of twenty years ago. He was an old man with a wrinkled face and white hair.

"Brother," said the visitor, holding out his hand, "are you glad to see me?"

With a joyous exclamation the other caught him in his embrace, and then seated him in a chair.

"This is a glad hour for me, Tom," he said. "I had given you up for dead, and I have all these years been reproaching myself for my harshness to you that night, you know."

"Hold on!" cried the other excitedly. "You must not overwhelm me with kindness until I have made restitution. Here in this package you will find the sum I took from the safe in the little tin box. It has taken me these twenty years to make it, but here it is at last."

"But I do not understand," interrupted Henry.

"Oh, but you must," replied his brother. "When you turned away to get your coat that night, I slipped the box out of the safe and concealed it. Then you closed the safe, unconscious of your loss, and I left you."

"But the box was empty!" shouted Henry.

"Impossible!" answered Tom, "for you told me that it contained £2,000. Well, I rushed off with the box, but repented, and was on my way to return it when I carelessly let it slip into the water when I crossed the river. Now you know why I ran away and concealed myself. I had but one object—to make enough money to pay you back, and then I would ask your forgiveness."

"Oh, how foolish!" said Henry. "Why, man, I found in the morning that my bookkeeper had taken the money from the box and carried it back to the bank that afternoon when he found that I was not going to use it until the next day. I missed the empty box, but I never connected that with your disappearance."

"Then this money——"

"Is yours," said Henry. "But even if you had lost my money, as you supposed, you should have come back to me. I sometimes talked roughly to you, but you ought to have known how I loved you, Tom."

The two white-haired men sat there till midnight, talking about old times and making their plans for the future.

"You must live with me, Tom," said Henry, as he took him home. "I can't trust you out of my sight again."

And Tom gave his promise. H. P. N.

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THE GREAT MIDDLEWICK BANK ROBBERY

CHAPTER I.

Twenty Thousand Pounds.

With an expertness born of long practice, the cashier of the Middlewick Bank counted and shovelled towards the payee of the cheque the gold which looked so much to return for the narrow slip of paper he had received in exchange. Just a minute or two he waited to satisfy himself that everything was correct, and then turned to a gentleman who stood awaiting his leisure.

Instead, however, of stating his business, the caller asked in a low, business-like tone:

"Is the manager of the bank in?"

The stranger was a brisk, bright-eyed man, dressed in a smart business suit, and evidently his visit was not altogether unexpected, for the cashier promptly answered:

"Mr. Bryant is in his room. Will you walk in, please. He is disengaged. Mr. Rutherford will show you the way."

"Is the manager of the bank in?"

"Thank you," said the stranger, quickly following his appointed guide to the door of a room situated at the rear of the modest building.

"Come in," called out the bank manager, his attention still on the papers before him. "Well, Rutherford, what now?"

"A gentleman to see you, sir," and, ushering in the stranger, the young man retired, closing the door quietly behind him.

The two men were evidently unknown to each other, for there was not the slightest recognition in the look which each gave the other.

"Mr. Bryant, I believe?" remarked the visitor.

"Yes, sir."

The caller handed a card to the manager who, after studying it a moment, laid it down and extended his hand.

"Ah, Mr. Taylor, I was expecting someone from your place. Glad to see you; take a seat, won't you? Here, this one near my desk."

The cordial invitation was fully accepted, the two men quickly placing themselves so that there was not the slightest chance of their conversation being overheard.

Mr. Bryant again glanced at the card, on which was printed:

ALFRED TAYLOR

National Detective Agency,
Phillip Cairns, *Manager.*

"Of course you have come in answer to my note to Mr. Cairns," queried the banker.

"Yes, sir. You sent it by express delivery midday yesterday; it reached our office last night, and so I was able to be here before eleven this morning."

Perhaps it was a slight oversight on Mr. Taylor's part which led Mr. Bryant to believe that he had only that morning reached Middlewick. As a matter of fact he had spent a busy time in the little country town the night before, but the manager was evidently satisfied with the answer.

"Your firm has the reputation of being both prompt, and, I think I may say, successful in these matters."

"Thank you. We have generally given satisfaction, and I hope we shall do so in this case. Your letter did not give the particulars, Mr. Bryant, of the loss your bank has suffered."

"No. I only referred in a general way to the robbery; it didn't strike me it was worth while going into particulars in the letter, as there would be much which of necessity would have to be told over again."

"Quite right."

Mr. Bryant had wheeled his cushioned chair round so as to face his visitor, and as he talked freely, but confidentially, his fingers smoothed the cord to which his eyeglass was attached.

The man who employs a detective to do a delicate job for him must act like a patient with a doctor—keep nothing back—and seemingly the banker had not the slightest intention of attempting to do so. The occurrence which had brought the detective to Middlewick was the most startling in the whole history of the institution, and since, for obvious reasons, the story of the robbery had been carefully hushed up, the banker was only too glad to find someone in whom he might confide without fear of the news spreading.

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Mr. Taylor's usual custom was to ask questions instead of allowing a patron to tell a voluminous and rambling story. By this means he learnt what he wanted to know, and no more. He separated the wheat from the chaff, finding grains which otherwise would have remained hidden.

"What is the extent of the bank's loss, Mr. Bryant?"

"Twenty thousand pounds."

"Is that the exact sum?"

"To a penny. The notes were done up in twenty packages, each containing a thousand pounds. Those alone were taken."

"But of course a considerable amount was left?"

"Yes, or our doors would not be open to-day. While it will cause us much loss, it cannot affect the solvency of the bank itself."

"When was the money taken?"

"The night before last."

"How was it done?"

"That, I hope you will be able to find out for us; it means a good fee for your agency," replied Mr. Bryant, with a smile, and still stroking his eyeglass cord.

"Excuse me expressing myself awkwardly. To be more direct. You tell me that the bank vault has the combination lock, the kind, I presume, which, although it is now rapidly going out of favour, was so popular a few years ago."

"Yes; it is secured by a combination of three letters. For some time past we have been thinking of employing a more modern apparatus, but unfortunately we have done nothing but think."

"How many possess the combination?"

"It looks as if hitherto unsuspected parties have it, for the vault was not injured in the least. Whoever opened it did so by using the combination regularly employed."

"How many were supposed to have it?"

"Only Herbert Stewart, the cashier, and myself."

"You changed it yesterday."

"Naturally. The horse being stolen we proceeded to lock the stable door."

His fingers smoothed the cord to which his eyeglasses were attached.

"How many watchmen have you?"

"Only one, an elderly man named John Warren."

"How long has he been in your employ?"

"The last twelve years, or more."

"Have you any suspicion of him?"

"Impossible; he is as honest as the day. I would as soon suspect myself."

"What account does he give of the robbery?"

"He knows nothing about it whatever."

"How's that?"

"He slept through it all."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Herbert and I questioned him closely; we could not help believing that he only told the truth when he declared he knew nothing at all about it. It is quite out of his power to counterfeit the consternation he showed."

"But how came he to fall asleep on that night?"

"Because, as he confessed, it has been his custom for years. He is stiff and rheumatic, and in his fright he owned that there hasn't been a night for a long time that he hasn't stretched himself on the settee in the waiting-room and slept till daylight. He kept up his invariable practice, because he knew of no reason for changing it."

"Well, then, how about the cashier?"

"I cannot suspect *him*. He is a married man, with two children, and one of the members of our local board."

"I wish, Mr. Bryant, that that could be accepted as a proof of his integrity. I will say, however, that I like his looks."

"When did you see him?"

"A few minutes ago. It was he who answered my inquiry as to whether or not you were here."

"He is above suspicion, I tell you," repeated the manager decisively. "It is impossible to suspect *him*."

"Very well, let him go, then," said the detective, whose "letting go" of the individuals named must be taken in a figurative sense. He had no intention of casting them out of his calculations until he had found out all about them for himself. "The only other employé that I observed behind the counter was the young man whom Mr. Stewart appointed to show me the way here."

"Oh, Rutherford. He is book-keeper here, and the only other employé, except on special occasions when we call in help, or an accountant; but we have not done that for the last fortnight or three weeks."

"Mr. Rutherford struck me as a bright young man."

"He is; and a thoroughly nice fellow apart from business. I always feel glad he gets on so well, as he is the sole support of his widowed mother."

"How long has he been with you?"

"About three years. Surely you don't suspect him! He has never been intrusted with the combination."

"Not openly; but having seen the vault or safe opened, and closed every six days out of seven may have given him the chance of finding it out unnoticed in that time."

Plainly this suggestion startled the banker. He had not thought of it before.

"It may be possible; but I sincerely hope not."

"So do I, for Mr. Rutherford's sake at least. Do you know whether he has any bad habits?"

"No——"

The intonation of the negative showed that the banker had interrupted himself, apparently for no cause.

"Excuse me, you were about to say——"

"Only that Rutherford is a frequent visitor at my house, and all but engaged to my niece. That shows how much I think of him."

"And Mrs. Bryant of course thinks with you on this point?"

"There is no Mrs. Bryant—that is, so far as I am concerned. I am a widower without any children, but my niece, Miss Denton, is dearer to me than all the world."

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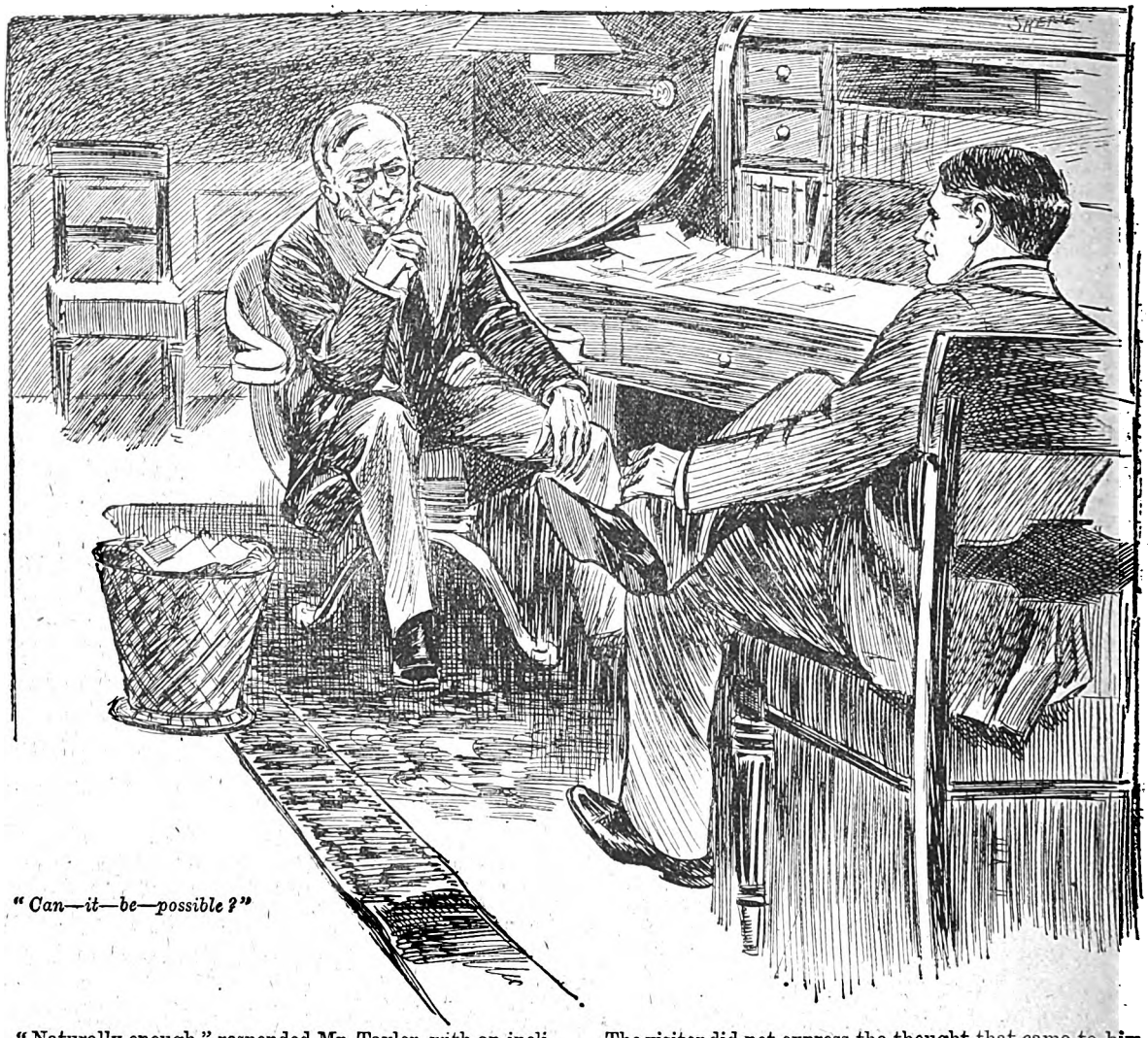

"Can—it—be—possible?"

"Naturally enough," responded Mr. Taylor, with an inclination of his head and an instinctive feeling that some interesting complications were dimly opening out before him. "Then he, too, is out of the question."

But even as he thus seemingly established Mr. Rutherford's integrity the detective resolved that he would undertake several investigations of which no hint should be given to the banker.

To his surprise, however, Mr. Bryant did not seem disposed to give up the startling idea that had been suggested. He continued to smooth his eyeglass cord, and with his eyes fixed on the floor, murmured, as though communing with himself:

"Can—it—be—possible?"

Mr. Taylor's keen eyes rested on the handsome, pale face. He was studying it intently.

"Do you think," said the banker abruptly, looking up, "that it could have been Mr. Rutherford?"

"At this stage of the inquiry I do not accuse anyone; it is too soon for that."

"But your suggestion that he may have got the combination from the cashier or me—why, it opens a world of possibility. Heavens! what will May think when she learns it?"

The visitor did not express the thought that came to him, that probably she already knew it, for what sins will a woman not forgive the man she loves?

"This burglary is known to the directors, Mr. Bryant?"

"Yes; we had a board meeting yesterday afternoon, when I laid the matter before them."

"What was done?"

"Several things were suggested, but nothing practical, unless you consider the offer of a large reward on the restoration of the money and no question asked, comes under the heading. However, the majority of us thought, and I agreed, that that was too much like compounding a felony. Finally, it was decided that I should be authorised to employ the best detective that could be engaged."

"Excuse me, but your letter to our agency was written previous to that decision, I fancy."

"It was; I told the directors that I was so sure what their final decision would be that I had written you in the morning, as the sooner the matter was put in hand the better."

"How did that strike them?"

"At first they were inclined to withdraw their authorisation, but concluded to let it stand."

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"You and Mr. Herbert are the only ones who know the old combination—or, at least, were believed to be. Who generally opened and locked the door of the vault?"

"The cashier. Except on special occasions, I rarely reach the bank before eleven, although, as a rule, I am here till after business hours, in which case I usually close the vault myself."

"You have never noticed anything peculiar in your bookkeeper's manner?"

The reply seemed prompt, but the detective observed an almost imperceptible hesitation on the part of the banker.

"I do not recall anything of the kind."

"And the directors have agreed to keep the robbery a strict secret?"

"Yes, not only for the sake of keeping the public faith in us unshaken, but also that the thieves might the more easily be traced. Our employés have been cautioned also, even to the watchmen, and I think no one has broken his promise."

"Has no reference to the matter been made by any of your clients?"

"Not so far as I know. Wait, I had forgotten. Half-an-hour before you came in—I was speaking to Mr. Herbert—someone asked me if I had heard anything, and, when I shook my head, said it was too bad."

"Who was he?"

"Well, truth to tell, I was so deep in the business that occupied me at the moment, that the question did not strike me as odd till after he had gone."

"It's a small matter, anyway," was the off-hand remark of the detective. "It is possible that he referred to something else. Anyway, it would be strange if some rumour did not get about considering who know the facts. Who is your new watchman?"

The abruptness of the question seemingly disturbed the manager, who replied with a faint smile:

"I fear you will think I have done a foolish thing. He is a man whom I never saw or heard of before yesterday, and an entire stranger to Middlewick. Yet I engaged him, and allowed him to commence his duties last night."

The detective indulged in a low whistle.

"That sounds odd, but what is your explanation?"

The subtle compliment was not lost on Mr. Bryant. He began to feel that he could like this man who on so short an acquaintance realised that however strange his action might seem, he had a reasonable explanation for it. More at ease, therefore, he continued:

"I was so disgusted at the result of employing home talent that I could think of no one in Middlewick to whom I would intrust the post. I telegraphed to my friend Cartwright, the manager of Trentern Bank, to send me a reliable watchman. By return wire, he told me that not only did he know of such a man but that he would reach Middlewick by the six o'clock train, and sure enough he did, bringing with him a letter from Mr. Cartwright."

"May I ask what the letter contained?"

"The highest recommendations possible. He said that the bearer, Jack Burton, had been their watchman for five years, during which time he had proved his courage more than once. Also that no bribe could tempt him to betray his trust, and that I might consider myself fortunate in securing his services. There was no discounting such a recommendation as *that*, and, after consulting with Mr. Stewart, the cashier, I engaged him, and, as I told you, allowed him to commence his duties at once."

"It seems to me," said the detective, "that if this—what did you say his name is?"

"Burton—Jack Burton."

"If this watchman, Jack Burton, is such a prize for you, he would be equally valuable at Trentern Bank, and I don't see why Mr. Cartwright was so willing to part with him."

"Naturally that thought occurred to me, and Mr. Cartwright did not forget to give a reasonable explanation. It seems that Burton's wife, to whom he was strongly attached, died last week, and that he asked Cartwright if he knew of anyone who would take him on for a time, as he would like to leave the town for a few months, if they would allow him, as he could not stand his old home and surroundings. This he thought would pull him together; but another situation was an absolute necessity, as he was too poor to live without earning anything. He resigned several days ago, and Cartwright said he would be only too pleased for him to come to me."

Without commenting on the story, the detective said:

"And Mr. Taylor's letter? Will you be kind enough to let me see it, if it is within your reach?"

Mr. Bryant selected the letter from among several lying in a clip on his desk, and handed it to his visitor, who scrutinised it closely for a few moments. Then he passed it back, without reading the contents.

"I only wanted to see the handwriting," he explained.

"Are you satisfied?"

"There can be no question as to that letter having been written by Alan Cartwright. Our firm keeps an account at Trentern Bank, and his handwriting is almost as familiar to me as my own."

"Then you think I have done quite right in employing Burton?"

"Quite. Mr. Cartwright is a man whose word carries weight, and you would have been most remiss had you passed his offer of Burton's services over. He is sure to have an easy time of it for a bit, for it is seldom two burglaries are attempted upon one place one after the other."

Mr. Bryant rose from his seat, as if nothing more could possibly be said upon the subject, but, at an inquiring glance from the detective, sat down again.

"One moment, Mr. Bryant; you said a few minutes ago that you occasionally called in an accountant to help your regular bookkeeper. About how often in the year does this take place?"

"Every three months, when we have our quarterly statements to make out."

"And do you always employ the same assistant?"

"Yes, it is only within the last two years we have needed such help, and on each occasion the same person has assisted."

His visitor . . . scrutinised it closely for a few moments.

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"How long ago, did you tell me it was, since last these statements were rendered?"

The manager reflected for a moment.

"Between two and three weeks."

"Will you give me this assistant's name, and whatever is worth knowing about the gentleman?"

"I cannot do that," replied the banker, with an odd smile.

"You cannot? I do not understand you."

"The party about whom you inquire is not a regular bookkeeper, but calls here when needed, and whatever services are rendered are gratuitous."

"But his name—what is *that?*" demanded the detective with a touch of impatience. "I must know his name."

"It is not a *he*," said Mr. Bryant. "Our assistant bookkeeper is a woman."

CHAPTER II.

Why this Signalling?

It was not often that Mr. Taylor showed surprise, but he did in this instance.

The possibility of the bookkeeper's assistant being a woman had not occurred to him until the declaration came from Mr. Bryant. True, in town lady clerks and bookkeepers had long ceased to be a rarity, but that they should have penetrated to this little country town, and, most wonderful of all, into a bank, was a surprise indeed. And what could her object be in thus giving her services gratis?

But the banker had no wish to mystify matters. His temporary levity had passed, leaving him once more the grave business man who had first greeted his visitor. With a gravity befitting the occasion, he said:

"The assistant is Miss Denton, my niece. She charges nothing for her help, because she does the work from choice, being fond of that sort of thing and having plenty of spare time on hand. She is a skilful accountant, and her services are valuable."

"I do not doubt that, or you would not avail yourself of them."

"She is always pleased when the time comes round for her to take her place at the desk. When I spoke of paying her for her work she was quite offended. She told me, however, that she wouldn't object to a present from me," added the banker, with a smile, "and of course she always receives one."

While this aimless conversation was going on, Mr. Taylor was putting two and two together.

A superficial survey of matters directed suspicion towards young Rutherford. He might prove innocent, but, at this stage of proceedings, things certainly looked black against him, and the detective decided he would bear watching.

According to Mr. Bryant's voluntary information, Mr. Rutherford was something more than a friend to May Denton. She it was who spent a few days every three months in the bank as her admirer's assistant. Some young women are wonderfully keen. Their innocent stare hides an amount of knowledge seldom dreamed of by the opposite sex. Was it not possible that Miss Denton had managed to learn the bank combination from her uncle without his suspecting it, and that, too, without watching his movements? What was easier than for her to do this by a little cunning natural to her sex?

Having gained this important secret, how readily she could pass it over to her lover. But the labyrinth thus opened out before the detective was too speculative. He felt that he might go on for ever and in the end reach nowhere. It is easy enough for a detective to theorise, but all the theorising in the world can accomplish nothing; action is the only practical course.

Most important of all, Mr. Bryant must not be allowed to suspect his thoughts regarding the interesting niece of whom he had spoken. Certainly, if any investigations were to be made in that direction, it must be without the banker's knowledge.

"Mr. Bryant, I must ask that you will send for the watchman," said Taylor, with hardly a break in their conversation.

The request evidently surprised the manager.

"I think Burton is most probably asleep at this hour, since he was on duty last night, but I will do as you wish."

"I do not mean Mr. Burton, but the other one—the old watchman. I presume he is also asleep," added Taylor with a smile.

"He lives not five minutes' walk from here. I'll send Rutherford round to say I want him."

The visitor had not suspected that it would necessitate the taking of the book-keeper from his work in order to attend to such a slight errand. Middlewick had not yet reached the dignity of town ways.

"My presence may embarrass him," said Taylor; "so while he is here I will keep out of sight. With your permission, that cupboard will serve my purpose," he added, glancing at the place where the manager was accustomed to hang his hat and overcoat.

Without waiting for a reply the detective bounded up and drew back the door. The key was in the lock, but not turned.

"It will do nicely," remarked Taylor, coming back, but not sitting down.

"But what am I to do with Warren when he comes?" asked the astonished banker.

"Question him about the bank burglary; you are greatly interested; you are not sure you have all the particulars; you have thought of something else you want to ask him,

The detective bounded up and drew back the door.

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and, therefore, you proceed to question him still more closely than before."

"But," questioned the banker, "I don't catch the meaning of all this. I have already repeated to you all the stupid fellow has told me; why bother with him further?"

"I want to study him, his words, his looks, and his manner while answering your questions. You know, Mr. Bryant, there is a good deal in that sometimes. It might embarrass him, as I have said, for me to join in the examination, or to be present while it is going on."

"Very well. Ah, there he is."

The knock on the door was timid. With one hasty stride Taylor reached the cupboard and drew the door to after him. Then, with hardly any perceptible hesitation, Mr. Bryant called out:

"Come in!"

It was the old watchman, rheumatic, partly bent, and very meek, who slouched into the room, with the air of a man obeying a summons to his own execution.

"Sit down, Warren," said the manager kindly, for despite the impatience he felt with his former employé he could not shut out a feeling of pity when he witnessed his distress.

Mr. Bryant motioned to the chair just vacated by the detective, and the watchman sank into it, in a state of collapse.

Taylor had shifted his position in the cupboard, so that he gained the precise view he wished. He could look straight into the old man's face, while the countenance of the banker was in profile. The blank darkness of the cupboard where the detective was concealed enabled him to do this without a possibility of being seen himself, especially by so unobservant a person as the watchman.

"Warren," said Mr. Bryant, "I have sent for you that I might ask a few questions about the unfortunate affair of the night before last."

"Yes, sir," was the meek response. "I would give the world, Mr. Bryant, if that had never happened; I would indeed, sir. If there's anything——"

"Never mind about that. Regrets are useless now. You admit that it has been your custom to go to sleep, say, about ten o'clock each evening, when you were on duty?"

"I think it—that it was between nine and ten—a little earlier than the time you say."

"It makes no difference; and on the night of the robbery you slept straight through until daylight?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you noticed nothing unusual during all that time?"

"No, sir."

"The outer door was locked, just as you locked it after taking charge of the building?"

'Yes, sir; them folks must have had keys that was oiled, so as not to disturb me."

"Then the first you knew of what had been done was when I sent for you yesterday midday and questioned you?"

"Yes, sir; and if you'd hit me I couldn't have been more surprised."

"Did you sleep more soundly than usual?"

"I must have done. I think the medicine——"

"You admit that you were in the habit of sleeping each night, and it isn't likely there was any difference in the depth of your slumbers. Have you told anyone about the robbery?"

"No one except my wife, and she promised to say nothing. You see, I had to give some reason for my leaving. I thought, at first, I would say it was because I was drunk, but she knows I never drink. Mr. Bryant—sir—do you think they'll—put me in prison?"

"It would serve you right if they did, but as it wouldn't do any good, you will go unpunished providing you keep the matter to yourself. Remember, not only are you to tell no one of the occurrence, but you must not allow anyone to talk to you about the matter."

The old watchman . . . slouched into the room.

Mr. Bryant could think of nothing more to ask the old man, and told him he could go. Repeating his expressions of remorse, and his promise to keep the matter a strict secret, the watchman shuffled through the door, leaning heavily upon his thick stick.

The next instant Alfred Taylor emerged from the cupboard and resumed his seat.

"Well, what do you think of him?" inquired the banker.

"Stupid, but honest; we may as well dismiss him from our calculations. No use in pumping *that* well."

All the same, however, the sharp-witted detective made the declaration with a mental reservation. Whether it was the manner or words of the old man, or both, cannot be said with certainty, but Taylor had caught something which started his ever busy thoughts in a new channel. Despite the manager's caution to Warren, and the old man's promise to keep his mouth shut, the detective resolved that he would try his hand at pumping the "dry well."

"No, it's not the least use bothering him," assented Mr. Bryant. "I asked him ten times as many questions yesterday as I did to-day, but the substance of all his replies is that he was asleep when he should have been awake, therefore he knows nothing. The best and only thing he can do is to keep quiet. Come in!"

The brisk knock at the door which had called for the manager's invitation to enter was so promptly obeyed that, even had Taylor wished to return to the cupboard, he could not have done so in time to avoid being seen by the new caller. Accordingly, the detective kept his seat, and looked at the man who, hat in hand, entered with the salutation:

"Good-morning, sir. I beg your pardon," with a glance at the detective, and half turning as though meaning to defer his interview till he could see Mr. Bryant alone.

"That's all right, Burton; come in."

The man seated himself awkwardly on the edge of one of the chairs near the door.

"Mr. Brown," said the banker, addressing Taylor, under the impression that he was doing a very clever thing by thus veiling his identity. "I think I can arrange it about the paper you offer, but, of course, I shall have to consult with my co-directors."

"Thank you," said the detective, rapidly taking the hint, "I trust you will find everything correct. I shall be only too pleased if you can manage the matter for me."

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"You will excuse me a moment while I hear what Mr. Burton has to say; he is a new watchman I have engaged."

"Ah," remarked "Brown," with a smile and slight nod towards the figure near the door; "I am sure you have taken a wise step."

Common gratitude ought to have led the new guardian of the bank to acknowledge this compliment, but he sat mute, as though the sentiment was a little too finely drawn for his full comprehension.

"Well, Burton, what can I do for you?" asked Mr. Bryant kindly.

"I called, please, sir, to ask whether any one else has the key to the outer door."

"Why do you ask that?" inquired the banker, in some surprise. "Have you any cause for suspicion?"

"No, sir; but when you gave me the keys that Warren had been using, I ought to have asked you. I just want to know, so that there can be no mistake about it."

"Mr. Rutherford, the book-keeper, Mr. Stewart, and myself, each have a key to the outer door."

"That's what I thought, sir, but I wanted to be sure. And who else has a key?"

"No one that I'm aware of except—*you understand.*"

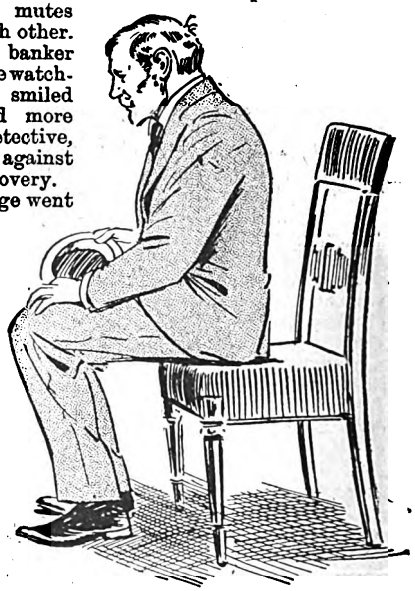
There was a world of significance in this remark. It was a clever reference to the parties who had entered not only the building itself, but had penetrated to its vaults. Mr. Bryant acted as though he did not wish "Mr. Brown" to suspect the meaning of his words. He therefore cast a knowing side-glance at "Mr. Brown," and gave the new watchman the benefit of a faint smile. Not to be behind his employer, Jack replied with a big wink of his left eye and a nod of his head; *he* was not to be caught napping. The face of the detective was as expressionless as the blank wall behind him.

Mr. Bryant turned partly towards his desk to search for some papers. Catching sight of the National Detective Agency's card he slipped it in his vest pocket; he did not wish that any outsider should see that, nor did he mean to disregard the detective's request that his presence in Middlewick should not be known to anyone else.

During the minute that the banker was thus occupied he, naturally, took no note of his visitors.

The detective and the watchman looked straight at each other, and both smiled. Then the former made a slight signal with one of his hands. The other replied at once. It suggested two mutes talking with each other. The back of the banker being towards the watchman, the latter smiled and gesticulated more freely than the detective, for he was secure against any possible discovery.

The interchange went on with great rapidity for a few seconds. Despite the blank stare which these two men gave each other when first they met in the directors' room, it was evident they were not strangers to each other. Indeed, from their mute intercourse it would almost seem that they were fairly intimate, and had, in fact, pre-arranged this meeting.



The man seated himself awkwardly on the edge of one of the chairs.

Suddenly Mr. Bryant turned again from his desk. As he did so the watchman rose to his feet, and after respectfully inquiring whether the manager had any further instructions for him, wished him good-morning, and once more left the manager and detective together.

(To be continued.)

A TEN-POUND PRIZE.

(See Next Page.)

On the next page is a puzzle picture composed of 88 squares. If these squares be rearranged in a certain order they will form a real picture.

We offer a prize of £10 to the first person who sends the correct solution. In order to give readers in all parts of the United Kingdom as equal a chance as possible, none of the solutions received will be opened until Thursday, March 12th, when all those received will be considered together. In the very unlikely chance of two or more correct solutions being included in one day's post, the prize will be given to the sender of the *neatest* one. Consolation Prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

If no correct solution be received on or before Tuesday, March 17th, 1896, the Ten-Pound Prize will be given to the sender of the solution then to hand which is most nearly correct.

Pictures should be packed flat or folded, not rolled, and the outside wrapper must be marked "April."

N.B.—To make the puzzle more difficult some of the squares have been turned upside down, and one of them has been left out altogether.

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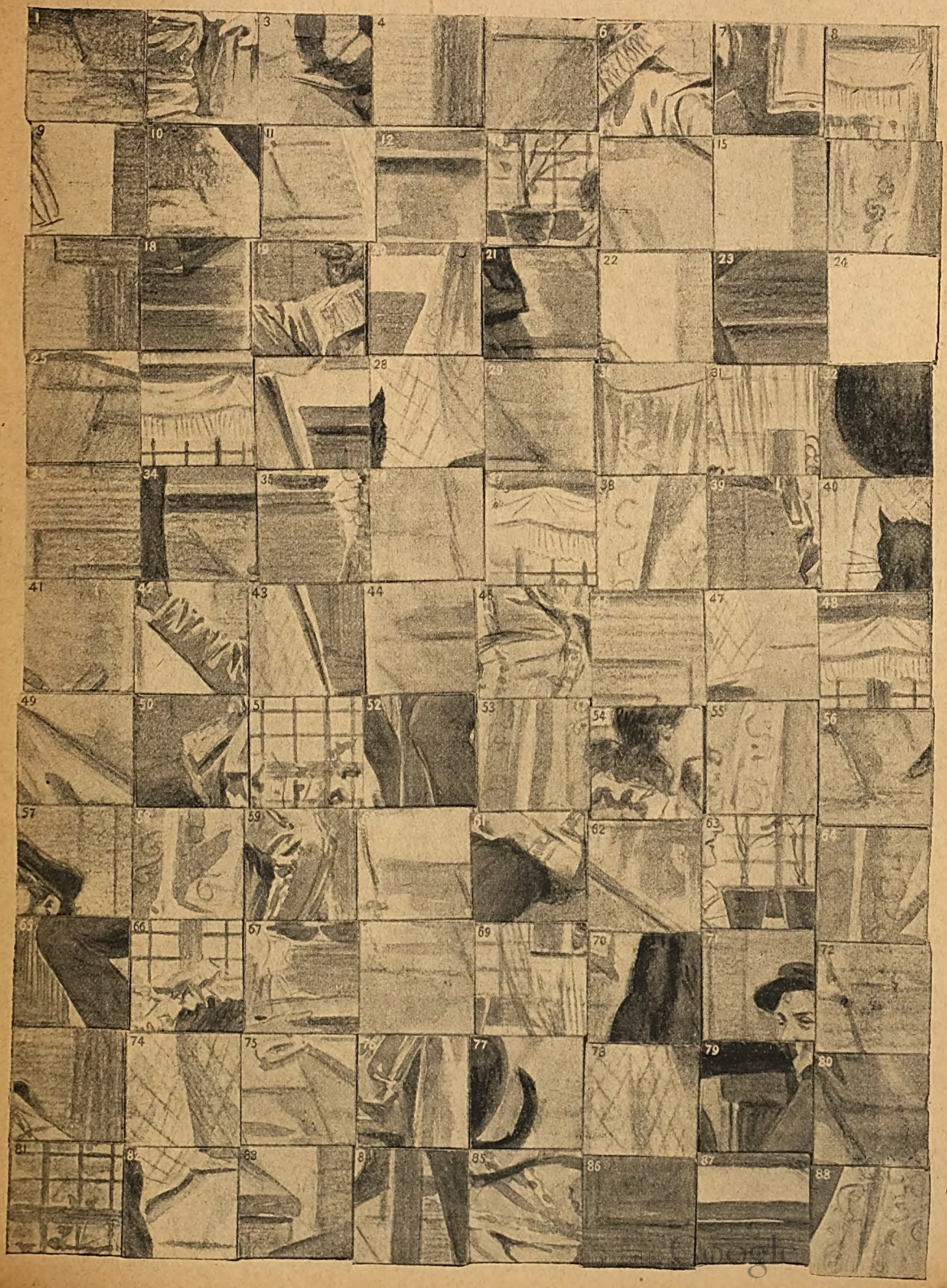
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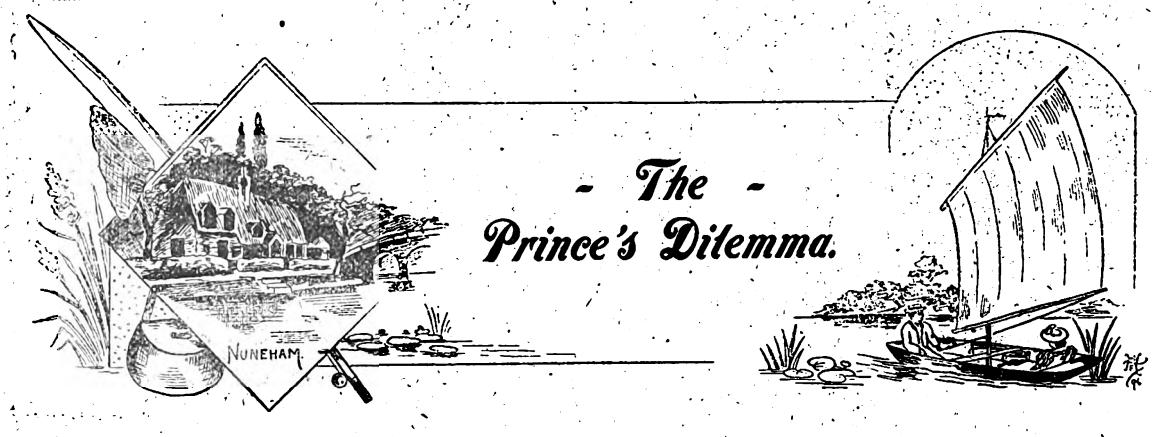

- The - Prince's Dilemma.

There once came to the palace of a semi-barbaric king a deputation of five strangers from a far country. They were men of venerable and dignified aspect and demeanour, and were received by a high officer of the court, to whom they made known their errand.

"Most noble officer," said the speaker of the deputation, "it so happened that one of our countrymen was present here, in your capital, on that momentous occasion when a young man, who had dared to aspire to the hand of your King's daughter, had been placed in the arena, in the midst of the assembled multitude, and ordered to open one of two doors, not knowing whether a ferocious tiger would spring out upon him, or a beauteous lady would advance, ready to become his bride. Our fellow citizen who was then present was a man of super-sensitive feelings, and at the moment when the youth was about to open the door he was so fearful lest he should behold a horrible spectacle that his nerves failed him, and he fled precipitately from the arena, and, mounting his camel, rode homewards as fast as he could go.

"We were all very much interested in the story which our countryman told us, and we were extremely sorry that he did not wait to see the end of the affair. We hoped, however, that in a few weeks some traveller from your city would come among us, and bring us further news, but up to the day when we left our country no such traveller had arrived. At last it was determined that the only thing to be done was to send a deputation to this country, and to ask the question: 'Which came out of the open door, the lady or the tiger?'"

When the high officer had heard the mission of this most worthy deputation he led the five strangers into an inner room, where they were seated upon soft cushions, and where he ordered coffee, pipes, sherbet, and other semi-barbaric refreshments to be served to them.

Then, taking his seat before them, he thus addressed the visitors:

"Most noble strangers, before answering the question you have come so far to ask, I will relate to you an incident which occurred not very long after that to which you have referred.

"Not very long ago there arrived here from a distant land a prince of distinguished appearance and undoubted rank. To such a one, of course, a royal audience was granted, and our King met him very graciously, and begged him to make known the object of his visit. Thereupon the Prince informed His Royal Highness that, having heard of the superior beauty of the ladies of his Court, he had come to ask permission to make one of them his wife.

"When our King heard this bold announcement his face reddened, he turned uneasily on his throne, and we were all afraid less some quick words of furious condemnation should leap from out his quivering lips. But by a mighty effort he controlled himself, and, after a moment's silence, he turned to the Prince, and said: 'Your request is granted. To-morrow at noon you shall wed one of the fairest damsels of our Court.' Then, turning to his officers, he said: 'Give orders that everything be prepared for a wedding in this palace at high noon to-morrow. Convey this royal Prince to suitable apartments. Send to him tailors, bootmakers, hatters, jewellers, armourers men of every craft, whose services he may need. Whatever he asks, provide; and let all be ready for the ceremony to-morrow.'

"'But your Majesty,' exclaimed the Prince, 'before we make these preparations I would like——'

"'Say no more!' roared the King. 'My royal orders have been given, and nothing more is needed to be said. You asked a boon; I granted it; and I will hear no more on the subject. Farewell, my Prince, until to-morrow noon!'

"At this the King arose, and left the audience chamber, while the Prince was hurried away to the apartments selected for him.

"And here came to him tailors, hatters, jewellers, and everyone who was needed to fit him out in grand attire for the wedding. But the mind of the Prince was much troubled and perplexed.

"'His Majesty's notions seem to be ver ypeculiar,' said the Prince, 'and, so far as I can see, they do not at all agree with mine.'

"At that moment an attendant, whom the Prince had not noticed before, came and stood beside him. This was a broad-shouldered man of cheery aspect, bearing an enormous scimitar, the upturned edge of which was keen and bright as any razor. Holding this formidable weapon as tenderly as if it had been a sleeping infant, this man drew closer to the Prince and bowed.

"'Who are you?' exclaimed his Highness, starting back at the sight of the frightful weapon.

"'I,' said the other, with a courteous smile, 'am the Discourager of Hesitancy. When our King makes known his wishes to anyone, a subject or visitor, whose

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disposition in some little points may be supposed not to wholly coincide with that of His Majesty, I am appointed to attend him closely, that should he think of pausing in the path of obedience to the Royal will he may look at me and proceed.'

"The Prince looked at him, and proceeded to be measured for a coat.

"The tailors and shoemakers and hatters worked all night; and the next morning, when everything was ready, and the hour of noon was drawing nigh, the Prince again anxiously inquired of his attendants when he might expect to be introduced to the ladies.

"'The King will attend to that,' they said. 'We know nothing of the matter.'

"Now came officers to conduct him to the grand hall of the palace, in which the ceremony was to be performed. Here the Prince found the King seated upon the throne, with his nobles, his courtiers, and his officers standing about him in magnificent array. The Prince was led in front of the King, and said:

"'Your Majesty, before I proceed further——'

"At that moment an attendant, who had approached with a long scarf of delicate silk, wound it about the lower part of the Prince's face so quickly and adroitly that he was obliged to cease speaking. Then, with wonderful dexterity, the rest of the scarf was wound round the Prince's head, so that he was completely blindfolded. Thereupon the attendant quickly made openings in the scarf over the mouth and ears, so that the Prince might breathe and hear, and fastening the ends of the scarf securely he retired.

"The first impulse of the Prince was to snatch the silken folds from his head and face, but as he raised his hands to do so, he heard the voice of the Discourager of Hesitancy, who gently whispered: 'I am here, Your Highness.' And, with a shudder, the arms of the Prince fell down by his side.

"Now before him he heard the voice of a priest, who had begun the marriage service in use in that semi-barbaric country. At his side he could hear a delicate rustle, which seemed to proceed from fabrics of soft silk. Gently putting forth his hand he felt folds of such silk close beside him. Then came the voice of the priest requesting him to take the hand of the lady by his side, and reaching forth his right hand the Prince received within it another hand, so small, so soft, so delicately fashioned, and so delightful to the touch, that a thrill went through his being. Then, as was the custom of the country, the priest first asked the lady: 'Would she have this man to be her husband?' to which the answer came, in the sweetest voice he ever heard: 'I will.'

"Then ran raptures rampant through the Prince's blood. The touch, the tone, enchanted him. All the ladies of the Court were beautiful; the Discourager was behind him, and through his parted scarf he boldly answered: 'Yes, I will,' whereupon the priest pronounced them man and wife.

"Now the Prince heard a little bustle about him; the long scarf was rapidly unrolled from his head, and he turned with a start to gaze upon his bride. To his utter amazement there was no one there. He stood alone. Unable on the instant to ask a question or say a word, he gazed blankly about him.

"Then the King rose from his throne and came down and took him by the hand.

"'Where is my wife?' gasped the Prince.

"'She is here,' said the King, leading him to a curtained doorway at the side of the hall.

"The curtains were drawn aside, and the Prince, entering, found himself in a long apartment, near the opposite wall of which stood a line of forty ladies, all dressed in rich attire, and each one apparently more beautiful than the rest.

"Waving his hand towards the line, the King said to the Prince: 'There is your bride! Approach and lead her forth? But remember this, that if you attempt to take away one of the unmarried damsels of our Court your execution shall be instantaneous. Now, delay no longer. Step up and take your bride.'

"The Prince, as in a dream, walked slowly along the line of ladies, and then walked slowly back again. Nothing could he see about any one of them to indicate that she was more of a bride than the others. Their dresses were all similar; they all blushed; they all looked up, and then looked down. They all had charming little hands. Not one spoke a word. Not one lifted a finger to make a sign. It was evident that the orders given them had been very strict.

"'Why this delay?' roared the King. 'If I had been married this day to one so fair as the lady who wedded you I should not wait one second to claim her.'

"The bewildered Prince walked again up and down the line. And this time there was a slight change in the countenance of two of the ladies. One of them among the fairest gently smiled as he passed her. Another, just as beautiful, slightly frowned.

"'Now,' said the Prince to himself, 'I am sure that it is one of those two ladies whom I have married. But which? One smiled; and would not any woman smile when she saw, in such a case, her husband coming towards her? But, then, were she not his bride, would she not smile with satisfaction to think he had not selected her, and that she had not led him to an untimely doom? But, then, on the other hand, would not any woman frown when she saw her husband come towards her and fail to claim her? Would she not knit her lovely brows? And would she not inwardly say: "It is I; don't you know it? Don't you feel it? Come!" But if this woman had not been married, would she not frown when she saw the man looking at her? Would she not say to herself: "Don't stop at me! It is the next but one. It is two ladies above. Go on!" And then again, the one who married me did not see my face. Would she not smile if she thought me comely? While if I wedded the one who frowned, could she restrain her disapprobation if she did not like me? Smiles invite the approach of true love. A frown is a reproach to a tardy advance. A smile——'

"'Now, hear me!' loudly cried the King. 'In ten seconds, if you do not take the lady given you, she who has been made your bride shall be your widow.'

"And as the last word was uttered the Discourager of Hesitancy stepped close behind the Prince and whispered: 'I am here.'

"Now the Prince could not hesitate an instant, and he took one of the ladies by the hand.

"Loud rang the bells, loud cheered the people and the King came forward to congratulate the Prince. He had taken his lawful bride.

"Now, then," said the high officer to the deputation of five strangers from a far country, "when you can decide among yourselves which lady the Prince chose, the one who smiled or the one who frowned, then will I tell you which came out of the open door, the lady or the tiger."

At the latest accounts the five strangers had not yet decided.

Percy Smith.

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The Widow of the Late Smith.

THERE were five of us in the coach—a huge, solid affair, resembling an immense box. It rested on enormous leather straps that allowed it to swing with a motion that is best described by saying it was diagonal, though in fact it was not diagonal at all. One moment we found ourselves sliding towards the foremost corner on the left, as the wheel on that side dropped heavily into some almost bottomless hole; the next instant we would be flying with pleasant unanimity through the rear window on the right, and again, seeking to force an outlet through the roof or floor. But the resultant of these motions, put together, added, and divided, is most nearly described by the word diagonal, and so, diagonal it is.

All five of the passengers were riding inside, for it was a day in November—cold and cloudy, and a light snow was spasmodically falling, as if really uncertain whether to stop or go on, but, on the whole, rather in favour of going on, it being a characteristic of western habits never to give up anything for any cause whatever, once it is begun. So, while a seat outside just at that time was better than no seat at all, it was by no means so desirable as a seat inside.

The road we were to traverse led through the mountains of Colorado, from the mining camp of Greenwood (though why Greenwood none can say—it was far above timber line) to Leadville. It was fairly good wheeling, as that word is understood in the Rockies, but six stout mules had all they could do to manage the coach. One moment they were groaning and straining up some steep incline; the next fairly lifted from their feet as we dashed furiously down a hill, our speed only partially checked by the brake, which Tommy the driver would frantically apply.

An Englishman travelling in the West soon became aware that every one has a title of some sort, no matter whether he has a right to do it or not, and the five men in the coach were known as the Colonel, the Major, the Judge, the Doctor, and the Professor. It is surprising how soon one becomes acquainted with his companions in such a place. Whether this is due to the community of sensations that govern the passengers as the vehicle lurches to the right or left, or the sociability of the men themselves, I cannot say. The fact remains, however, and in less than half-an-hour after we had started I was on familiar terms with the past history, present occupation, size of pile, and name of each of my fellow-travellers.

On the coach was an express-box, said to contain thirty thousand dollars in bullion, the product of the Greenwood mines. In a rack near the driver's feet hung two Colt's revolvers and a Winchester rifle. The road was considered safe enough, for no robbery had occurred there since the camp had been in existence, still the stage company preferred to make reasonable precautions. Hence the weapons.

After we had exchanged our names and such parts of our personal history as we felt free to give we relapsed into silence. The Westerner, although a sociable, is not a talkative animal. He converses in heats. For a time our quiet was unbroken, save by the groaning and creaking of the coach, the cracking of the driver's whip, and his rapidly-uttered oaths.

Perhaps it is well that justice can never be done—in print—to the profanity of the Western mule-driver. It is as impossible to describe as the singing of some beautiful aria by some sweet-voiced singer! Not that the two can be compared in any way. I merely wished to illustrate the utter inadequacy of words in type to represent the sounds.

It was at the end of one of Tommy's flowery periods (which came to our rescue when the coach, stuck fast at the foot of a veritable hill of difficulty, had at last been dragged up by the mules, inspired by the out-pouring) that the gentleman occupying the middle seat (left) broke the silence. We knew him as Professor Blood, "the hull owner of the Blackeye mine of Greenwood and several others." It was at the close of Tommy's

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exhortation, I say, which began softly and slowly, then gradually increased in volume, speed, and power, until the flow was simply overwhelming, that the "Professor" remarked pleasantly:

"Tommy seems to rattle it off tol'aby easy, I'm thinkin'. It's a great gift. Wonderful what 'twill do sometimes. When I was a-teamin' it up to Leadville, I would bet willin' I could cuss a dead mule up a six-hundred-foot grade, with a load, and all by the parts o' speech. It's just like anythin' else, though, takes practice.

"Those was great days," he went on a retrospective sigh, "great days. We was gettin' twenty and thirty cents a pound fur stuff, an' makin' slathers o' money; an' losin' it, too," he added, with a laugh. "I 'member comin' down over the divide one night alone, with three thousan' dollars in my pocket, when a road agent held me up an' cleaned me out. I was pretty mad, but I had to pay cash."

"I'd like to know," said the Doctor, "how one or two men can stop and rob a dozen, all well-armed. It looks as if they had no nerve. I don't think I'd stand it."

The Judge whistled softly at this remark; the Major smiled and made a pretence of wiping the window with his coat-sleeve and looking out; the Colonel expectorated mournfully. The Professor alone was calm.

"Pardner," said he, looking the Doctor in the eye, and tapping him gently on the knee as he spoke, "was you ever held up?"

The Doctor shook his head.

"I thought likely," said the Professor significantly. "Just look here, when you are stopped, cask up quietly and perlitely. It's runnin' too much of a risk to object. If any man is looking for a chance to climb the golden stairs, though barin' of his buzzum for his fellow-creatures—without compensation—let him. It ain't in my line. I'm pretty sure, an' so I say, if ever you're held up, just fork out without any back talk—it's really the cheapest and a long way the safest."

These sentiments seemed to meet with universal approval from the other occupants of the coach, and the Doctor, quite crushed by the weight of opinion against him, relapsed into silence. I was the doctor.

After this conversation became desultory. Now and then a passenger would volunteer a remark, which sometimes elicited a reply and sometimes did not. Often, as the road led up some steep incline, we would get out and walk to restore, by exercise, the circulation in our benumbed limbs. Twice the coach stopped at relay stations, where fresh mules were harnessed in the place of the tired-out animals. The stations were nothing more than rough log stables, with accommodation for the men who fed and cared for the mules.

The snow had been falling all the afternoon in fine flakes, and had spread over the earth a thin white cover that partially hid the roughness of the mountains and whitened the light that came through the clouds into which we sometimes drove. The road was becoming very heavy and the progress slow, when, to our relief, the coach about four o'clock entered a small park of a few hundred acres and pulled up in front of Sampson's, twelve miles from Leadville. While fresh mules were being harnessed we alighted and stepped into a room that served as bar, office, parlour, and reading-room, for Sampson's was a hotel as well as a relay station.

The establishment was owned and managed by Mr. Sampson and his wife, Almiry, or to put it in another way, Sampson's and Sampson himself were controlled by Almiry. A modern Delilah she, who when she married Sampson, had, speaking figuratively, clipped his locks, and left him deprived of all ambition. There was a rumour current that Sampson drank, a rumour not altogether without foundation, since no one had ever seen him entirely sober. His sole duty was to tend bar, and when not occupied in ministering to the wants of others he was looking after himself.

There was but one beverage sold at Sampson's—whisky—though there hung upon the wall, behind the rough bar, an illuminated card, setting forth, in fly-specked characters, the superior merits of Hall's Jamaica Ginger. But as for the ginger, that was not to be had. Nor were there any indications, beyond dusty lithographs nailed askew to the wooden partitions, that soda water, seltzer, and Mumm's Extra Dry were procurable on demand. And so it was fortunate that the systems of those passengers who needed stimulation craved whisky only, for that was positively all that was there.

We had not noticed at first, in the dim light of the room, the figure of a woman, clad in deep mourning and wearing a heavy veil drawn over her face. She sat in a dark corner and seemed to shrink from observation. But when Tommy entered, after looking to his cattle, and had fortified his nerves with four fingers of the "regular thing," swallowed without a murmur, Almiry took him aside and engaged him in earnest conversation, and her gestures then, for the first time, directed our attention to the woman.

Our halt was necessarily short, and we were soon back in the coach; the mules had been changed, and we were ready to start. But Tommy lingered, and when at length he appeared at the door, seemed in no hurry. He stood there, slowly drawing on his gloves and surveying the scene with a carelessly critical eye, and an expression of countenance that seemed to indicate that as for him, if he were to be given the chance, he would make a good deal better world than this one—easy. In his mouth was a cigar, tipped up at such an angle that the glowing end nearly touched the wide brim of his sombrero. The Major, irreverently inspired, voiced the sentiments of the party when he remarked in a drawling tone:

"I reckon that after being the angel Gabriel, for pure glory an' so forth I'd ruther be a driver to a coach than most anythin'."

Just then there appeared in the doorway the lady in black, to whom Thomas gallantly offered his arm, and thus escorted to the coach. As they approached the Colonel gave a little groan.

"We're goin' to have lovely woman along with us," he said plaintively. Consternation was depicted on each face when the coach door was opened, and Tommy, looking in, remarked authoritatively: "Sorry, gentlemen, but I shall have to trouble you. Here's a lady goin' to Leadville, an' she's goin' inside. Jump in marm!" and in the young woman jumped with remarkable lightness, and took the vacant seat in the forward corner.

"Cunnell, you'll look after her," said Tommy at the door; "she's in my charge. Widder of Smith, she is; him as was killed down to the Walker mine last month, but she don't savy a word of English, bein' French. You know'd Smith, didn't ye, Cunnell?"

"Yes, I know'd him well enough, but I never know'd he had a widder. I'll look after her—in English," growled the Colonel, and the door slammed, and the stage rolled off.

As we pulled out the clouds parted for an instant, and a bright ray of sunlight lit up the coach, striking full

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upon the dark veil of our new companion. It made briefly visible the outlines of her face, and those of us who were fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of it were convinced that the lady had great beauty. Indeed, the judge, who had a happy facility of expression, acquired from a long, though not lucrative practice at the bar, leant over to the doctor and whispered in tones of fervent admiration:

"She's as pretty as Cle-op-e-try, by Jove!" to which the Doctor responded with an assenting nod of much vigour.

Nowhere in the world is a lady more certain of respectful consideration than in the wild West. She's invariably treated with a chivalrous gallantry that is really magnificent; men hasten to do her homage and are proud to be commanded by her. Still, the presence of Mrs. Smith in the coach acted on the party as a little restraint, which the Judge and the Colonel vainly endeavoured to dispel.

"Fond of travellin', ma'am?" said the latter, in his best off-hand style, as he leant towards her and smiled handsomely.

The lady made no reply, and the Judge knocked the Colonel's elbow.

"Sh, Colonel!" he said; "you don't s'pose she understands you, when it's as much as I can do to untangle your ideas from your words. She speaks French!"

The Colonel accepted the rebuke meekly, and made no further conversational effort. The road became more and more difficult as we advanced, and the fresh mules were unruly and drove very hard. Several times in bad places they had balked, and the coach had swung round in a way that would have upset a lighter vehicle, yet no exclamation of alarm escaped from the lady, who sat motionless in her corner.

"Turrible bad place to be held up 'long here," said the Major, after an unusually long silence, during which the coach had slowly pounded over a huge rock and then slid off with an unpleasant scrunch. "I should hate to be stopped here, for I have a little matter of twelve hundred dollars about me which I don't care to lose. Of course, we're all friends here?" he hastily asked.

We were, and then it came out that each man was carrying various sums of money ranging from five hundred to five thousand dollars, the last amount being the property of the Colonel, who described accurately how he had concealed it in a package sewed in his clothing next to his body, where it was quite inaccessible to dishonest persons.

"I reckon it'll take a pretty smart chap to find that," he remarked complacently, as he slapped his hand on the spot where the treasure was concealed. We could not deny this, and murmurs of admiration were heard at his shrewdness. All this time—in fact, since we left Sampson's—the mysterious Mrs. Smith had not moved or changed her position. She still kept her veil down, and in the slowly waning light her black dress seemed to emphasise the shadows in the coach.

"Judge," said the Major at length, "it must be lonesome for her. You're consid'able of a lingoist, couldn't you give her a little touch in the native, just to be perlite?"

The Judge looked embarrassed and scratched his head confusedly.

"Why, mebbe I might rack out some French," he said. "It ain't much to do, but er—what'll I say? You got to be mighty circumspec' in talkin' French to a lady. It's a terrible free langwidge."

Both the military men were impressed by this, the Colonel particularly so, and for a moment his face was expressive of painful perplexity.

"Well, just say somethin' civil," he said at length. "Ask her if she wants the winder up. 'Tain't likely she does; but you might ask her."

"Oh, no, Colonel," said the Judge, "not that. That particular word winder, in French," here the Judge lowered his voice to a whisper, "is cussin', an' you'll hev to excuse me. That's where I draw the line."

"Well, chin your own way then," said the Colonel testily; "though I reckon I can open a winder fur a lady—in French—without breakin' any of the commandments. Only say somethin' or we'll think you don't know how."

This was touching the Judge on a tender spot, and looking at the Colonel with an air of haughty dignity, he said slowly:

"If it'll amuse the boys, I reckon I'll take a little pasear, though I'm a trifle rusty in my langwidges just now. Had consider'ble practice, too, down in San Migell county."

Then, with a soft ahem and a flourish of his handkerchief, he leant forward, and casting a bewitching glance at the lady, murmured:

"*Beunos dias, señora. Habeis vosotros*—er—that is—*como esta vey?*"

The lady made no answer; in fact, seemed not to hear, but the Judge was in no wise disconcerted.

"Reckon she was thinkin' of the late lamented, and didn't wholly catch on to my idea," he remarked pleasantly. "I'll open another lead," and again he smiled as he murmured:

"These gen'lemen," indicating us with a graceful and comprehensive sweep—"bein' gen'lemen, and well acquainted with good sassiety, hev asked me to pass their compliments to you, ma'am, which I do now. *Er—el tiempo es bein inconstanty, señora*, and *esta—er*——" The Judge concluded the sentence with a gesture. "It's a little remark in the vernacular of the French," he explained, "an' I reckon it'll fetch her."

It certainly did seem to have some effect, for the lady uttered a sound strangely like a chuckle, but said nothing.

"Judge," said the Colonel, after waiting a reasonable time for an answer, "I'm afraid your langwidges have been—so to speak—tampered with. I've always allowed there was some difference between French and Spanish myself."

The Judge waxed indignant. "A joke's a joke, an' all right," he said; "but I didn't s'pose but there was a man here but knowed the roots of the two langwidges was the same, an' if you can only confine your talkin' to roots—an' you gen'rally can in genteel sassiety—it makes no odds whether it's French or Spanish."

"All right, Judge; all right," said the Colonel soothingly. "Of course, we knowed that well and good, but a man must have his little joke now an' then. But ask her—in your roots—if she's any objection to smoke."

The Judge, partly mollified, did not essay this in speech, but beginning even farther back than "roots," managed to ask the question by signs. The lady nodded her assent with vivacity, and drawing a silver case from her pocket, took therefrom a cigarette, which, after raising her veil a little, she placed between her lips.

At first we were amazed, but the Colonel, with that self-possession which had always distinguished him and made him so popular with the sex, quickly recovered himself and gallantly offered the lady a light, which she

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graciously accepted. Then murmurs of admiration were heard. The Major audibly compared her to "a butterfly and a whip-poor-will, by gad," the Colonel swore that "she took him, blamed if she didn't," while the Judge repeated his former opinion, and declared that "she was a reg'lar Cle-op-e-try from the word go." The Professor was silent, but I have reasons for believing that he endorsed all the others.

"What I admire in lovely wimmin," said the Colonel, as we sat there quietly smoking, "is the er—ability she possesses to adapt herself to circumstances, as illustrated in the above. We are all friends here, in course, so we can be comfortable; but I'm safe in sayin' I shall be glad to git to Leadville. That little matter of four thousand dollars I got sewn into my—Judge, sure the lady can't understand English—my—in fact, gentlemen, my shirt," said the Colonel frankly, again indicating the exact location of the treasure, "is a tax on my mind, an' I want to get it off."

Outside the snow had ceased falling, and the dusk of the winter's evening was slowly deepening into darkness. High on the slope that rose on our right stood a solitary pine-tree, that had pushed its way through the rocks, and now stood, lonesome and sad, by night and day, keeping a melancholy watch on the valley. The sun, long since hidden to us below, shot a ray as a good-night message, and for an instant the tree was ablaze; then the light died quickly out, and we were in semi-darkness again.

The road wound its way round the face of a high cliff; on one side towered a wall of rock sheer three hundred feet; on the other sank an unsoundable chasm. Tommy sat on the box, his two lamps lit, and his tongue playing a rapid accompaniment to his whip. Inside, the small reflector at the end of the coach only served to make the night without seem darker than ever.

Silently we sat there smoking, the ends of our cigars alternately glowing and dimming in the dingy air. An unusual volley of sound from the box, a cracking of whips, a shouting, and then the stopping of the coach with a lurch startled us out of our quiet. Then a shout from Tom as he spoke to his cattle, and a voice, ringing like a bugle, was heard from the rocks above:

"Come, none o' that! Make a straight haul for it! Throw off that box! Lively, now! Put up your hands an' git down! Every one of you, *git down!*"

Sorrowfully we obeyed. The description the Professor had given a few hours before of our probable sensations was exactly true. A pair of six-shooters held in the hands of a stalwart man, whose face was partly concealed by a black mask, hastened our descent, and in a moment we found ourselves ranged in line, with our hands above our heads, a meek, unhappy, cowed group.

At one end of the line stood Tommy; at the other stood the Colonel, cool, impassive, dignified, confident in the security of his treasure. The last to descend was the widow, but a widow no longer, for out of the coach there sprang an active young fellow, of slender but sinewy build, smooth-shaven, dressed in the conventional garb of the Western rider, and carrying in his hand a nickel-plated six-shooter. And this was Mrs. Smith—*who did not speak English.* Anyone standing near the Judge at that time, might have heard an exclamation, both forcible and profane. The "widow" heard it, for with a little laugh he (or she) touched his finger to his lips and said:

"Hush, Judge! that's cussin', an' you draw the line there you know."

And then he proceeded to search the pockets of his fellow-travellers as if it were a very commonplace affair, which it certainly was not, and relieve them of their valuables, his associate keeping guard meantime.

Down the line he went, doing his work quickly but carefully, but before he was done the other began to grow impatient.

"Hurry up, Jim!" he said; "ain't you most through? We're late."

"All done but this one," said Jim, the quondam widow, as he halted before the Colonel; "he's got four thousand dollars sewed plum to his shirt. I reckon I'll hev to rip the old coon open to git it." Saying which he drew his knife, and with a quick movement as if to disembowel the Colonel, slipped the point through his clothing, and with a wrench pulled out the package.

"Sorry to trouble you, gents," said the larger man bowing politely, "but I won't detain you much longer, fur I know you want to git to Leadville. I hope this old gen'leman," pointing to the rent in the Colonel's dress, "won't take cold. He must be careful—good men are scarce." The Colonel snorted. "You will kindly stand just where you are till I give the word. There is a few friends of mine a-lookin' at us from the rocks, and I really wouldn't move very much if I was you—I really wouldn't, fur their guns is all hair-triggers, an' dreadful liable to go off. You won't move, now, will you?"

We would not! Wild horses could not have dragged us from that spot, for up in the rocks we fancied we could see two shining barrels, aimed truly at us, and we were really anxious to remain quiet. Before we knew it we were alone; our new acquaintances had vanished in the dusk, and an instant later we heard the same voice, ringing out above us:

"Git into the coach now and git!"

And we got.

ARNOLD WEEVIL.

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THE PREY OF THE WOLVES.

Two men on a tree. A tree stunted, standing solitary in a clearing. A tree with only one branch, and that near the top of the trunk.

Upon that branch the two men—two hunters—are sitting astride, and holding on with the grim desperation of men who know that a relaxing of the fingers, the overbalancing of a limb, a careless jerk, may mean death.

Around the clearing the dark woods bristle blackly on the mantle of white that covers the earth. Above, the morning sun shines coldly in the clear blue sky of France.

The men are both young, of good, broad build and fine stature, and ruddy faces that tell of fresh air and abundant exercise, and though in deadly peril, seem not in hopeless fear. Yet their position is dangerous enough to make the bravest shudder.

For the snow in the woods is pitted all over with rough footprints, going this way and that in apparent confusion, but converging into the clearing nevertheless, and centring round the solitary tree. And for every four feet that have trodden those prints into the snow there is a shaggy body and a cruel head with fierce-fanged jaws and lolling tongue and horrid eyes. Round the tree—some leaping up in vain effort to reach the two men, some sitting and glaring at the prey beyond their reach—snarl and snap and quarrel a pack of hungry wolves.

One of the men—the younger and darker-haired—moves cautiously on the bending branch, and looking at the other with a curious gleam in his brown eyes, says:

"It is a pity, Leon."

"What is a pity—in particular?" asks his companion in danger.

"That we were in such haste that we dropped our guns—and our cigarettes!"

"You are incorrigible, Pierrot! You would jest in the face of death."

"What would you have?" says Pierrot, laughing lightly. "Surely death is gruesome enough in itself to need no added gloom. But, Leon, we need have no fear of these howling brutes, if this branch holds; for are not the gentlemen from the château coming this way at noon?"

"True, Pierrot. But why 'If this branch holds?' It is firm enough."

"Do you think so, Leon? Did you hear *that?*"

That was a short, sharp crack of the wood near the joining of the branch to the jagged trunk top.

"Yet I think it will bear us till the gentlemen arrive," says Leon, a paleness passing across his face nevertheless. "If it does not——"

"If it does not, Leon?"

"Then one or both of us will have seen the last of France—and of Babette—before many hours."

"You speak more truly than your custom, Leon," says the younger man, with a scarcely perceptible sneer in his tone. "As you say, we shall have seen the last of France—and you might have added, the first of a wolf's internal economy. We shall also have seen the last of Babette. But that will matter little to us, Leon, for she loves neither you nor me."

He pauses as the branch dips lower and the tree creaks and cracks with ominous sound, and shakes a clenched hand vindictively at the snarling brutes below before he goes on.

"If Babette loved either you or me, Leon, it would be the other's duty to slip off this arm of salvation into the jaws of these hungry fiends, if by so doing the chosen one would have a chance to live to gladden her dear heart."

"It would be a duty," acquiesces Leon, his face blanching at the thought, and his shifty eyes avoiding the other's steady gaze.

"Failing that distinction," pursues Pierrot, imperturbably, even with a smile, "we live or die together: for though I have lived a wild life, Leon, and have no hope of woman's love now Babette will not look at me, I prefer my body intact so much that only for her sake would I have it dissected and digested by these ravenous wretches until there is no help for it. And I fear there is little help now—after all. And they are eyeing us very hungrily!"

Leon is silent, as a sudden light leaps into his eyes and a flush reddens his brow, and in his silence the branch bends lower and creaks and cracks again and again and yet again, while the wolves, seemingly gifted with human intelligence, crowd closer and fight with each other for the best places under the breaking bough.

The men look into each other's eyes with mute terror as they cling to that swaying arm, which threatens to come crashing down with every tremour of their limbs. Pierrot is callous to the end.

"To-day's tragedy will be a great relief to Mademoiselle Babette, friend Leon!"

"The branch would hold one of us, Pierrot?" gasps the other.

"It would, Leon?"

"You are sure?"

"I am certain, Leon."

Then there is silence again, save for the dread crack, cracking of the parting trunk top, the downward

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swaying of the fatal branch, and the impatiently, expectant sniffing of the lolling-tongued wolves.

Then Leon speaks, averting his glance from his comrade.

"Pierrot!"

"Yes, Leon."

"I spoke to Babette last night on the church steps—you knew that?"

"Yes."

"I asked her to be my wife."

No response; only the piercing gaze of the steady brown eyes.

"And she consented, Pierrot."

There is a note of defiance in the man's voice as he utters the lie.

"Is this true, Leon?"

"I swear it, by St. Marie!" cries the other. "Our wedding-day is fixed for the end of Lent."

The branch bends again, creaking and snapping, until the leaping wolves can almost reach the men's feet. On the trunk itself—now splitting downwards—there is no safety. Pierrot looks at his friend, his rival, with a smile, and asks once more:

"You will swear that this is true, Leon? You will swear it by the Holy Cross of our Blessed Lord?"

"I will swear it, Pierrot, by the Holy Cross of our Blessed Lord! Babette has promised to be my wife," shrieks Leon in a spasm of fear, as the branch sways lower still and the wolves leap howling up with cruelly-snapping jaws.

"It is well, Leon. Do not pain her dear heart more than you can help with this tragedy! The branch will hold now, never fear!"

And he slipped off the tree.

George C. Wallis.

My Lady of the Glistening Tresses.

Seated in front of a long looking-glass in her boudoir was Miss Ethel Kennedy, late one night towards the end of the London season. She was an actress, the principal star of the New Theatre, who had been "discovered" by the energetic manager only a short time since. For the first time in three seasons he was making the theatre pay.

She had scarcely been able to realise yet what an important person she was; the old lady who was attending her at the time, the faithful Martha, did, however. She was engaged in brushing out her young mistress's hair, and she had been doing so for three-quarters of an hour. Night after night she had to comb it, and brush it with the utmost pains; yet it was so beautiful, so luxuriant, so soft and long and silky, that she always forgave it the trouble it caused her. "My hair is my fortune," Miss Kennedy had often quoted to her.

"Do you know," she said presently to Martha, who, as a privileged person received all her confidences, "there's a man who sits in the front row of the stalls who's deeply in love with me. He takes the same seat night after night, and looks at me ever so sweetly."

"And no wonder," answered her maid, "when he sees you coming on in your beautiful white dress, and your hair all shining and a glimmering in the light."

She caressed the silky locks in her hand.

"There are lots of them I expect, too."

"Nonsense," said Miss Kennedy. Nevertheless, she thought this not improbable as she gazed at her image in the glass. For there were other things about her besides her beautiful hair to make men love her.

A humourous thought struck old Martha. "If it wasn't for the play-acting, Missie, you could soon make your fortune."

"How?" inquired Miss Kennedy, but she was thinking of the man in the stalls.

"If you were to show off your hair in a shop window, you'd soon be rich," chuckled Martha.

But Miss Kennedy put an end to flattery and nonsense and prepared for a long night's rest. Nevertheless her thoughts went back to the man in the stalls.

A few nights later Miss Kennedy brought to a successful termination her engagement at the New Theatre. She had made a name for herself, and had already received a handsome offer for the next season.

The following morning she was enjoying the luxury of a late breakfast. She glanced carelessly through her letters until she came to one from a lady friend. This she quickly opened, eagerly devoured the contents. It was from a Mrs. Summers, asking "her darling Ethel" to spend a few days with her.

At three o'clock in the afternoon she was ringing at her friend's door. The polite butler informed her that Mrs. Summers was expecting her in the garden. Would she step out and find her? As she crossed the terrace, and tripped down the broad steps leading to the lawn, she saw her friend running towards her with a smile of expectation on her face. I will spare you the commonplaces and the platitudes of small talk that resulted, and simply mention that presently Mrs. Summers' eyes fell on her son, to whom she beckoned, and who came forward immediately.

As he saw more clearly his mother's latest guest his heart gave a great throb of joy. Before him stood the girl for the sake of whom he had gone night after night to the New Theatre, in order that he might be near her.

After tea and chatter, they sat together in the drawing-room, Miss Kennedy and young Summers.

"Do you know," said the young man, after they had been chatting together for a little while, "I feel as if I had known you all my life."

Miss Kennedy waited a moment before she replied.

"You certainly were a most devoted admirer," she whispered.

Young Summers started. So she had discovered him.

He thought he had never met a more charming companion in his life. He already fancied himself deeply in love with her. "My lady of the glistening tresses," he had long ago named her to himself.

Mrs. Summers was going to take her party that night to a fancy dress ball. Miss Kennedy came down as one of Shakespeare's heroines; she was dressed in a soft white dress and had plaited her beautiful hair, which

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fell in long braids down her shoulders, to show it off to the best advantage. If ever a man was in love with a pretty woman's face, it was young Summers that night.

It was an early dance, and the Summers were the first to leave, for Miss Kennedy was tired with her exertions of the last week, and the journey from the town in the morning. It was a short drive home, and by two o'clock there was not a soul moving in Mrs. Summers' house. All was quiet and wrapped in slumber.

Suddenly, as the first ray of the early summer sun was creeping up the sky, a cry rang out from the servants' part of the building, a cry so loud and so full of agony that there was not a person near who did not start up in terror.

In a moment all was bustle and confusion. A fire had broken out; it had caught a light muslin curtain; it had licked up the paper on the walls, and before the terrified girl in whose room it had originated had time to do more than shriek for help, it was raging fiercely.

"I feel as if I had known you all my life."

The last person to become aware of the danger was young Summers himself. He woke up with a strange unaccountable feeling of terror at his heart; with a choking sensation in his throat. He rushed to the door and saw his mother, pale and trembling, standing before him.

"Thank God you are safe!" she murmured.

"Where's Ethel?" he asked, "is she safe? Tell me quickly."

The terrified woman pointed to the far end of the house towards the west wing. "She's there," she said, "they're trying to get her out. I came for you."

Young Summers stayed to hear no more. He sped along the passage, down a long corridor, at the end of which ran a flight of stairs. It was choked with smoke and flame. He covered his face with his hands and rushed blindly forward. Presently he came out into the garden. A group of men were standing round a window against which a ladder had been placed. The men were hesitating for a moment, each waiting for the other to volunteer the ascent. Young Summers rushed madly into their midst, scattering them on all sides. He sprang on to the ladder, bounded up, and in a moment was at the window. It was securely fastened. With one blow he broke it open. Scrambling through the glass, with lacerated hands and feet he reached the floor. A flame shot up beneath him, lighting up the room. He glanced at the bed—it was empty. He staggered to the door, and stumbled against a white object lying on the ground. Picking it up in his arms, he once more scrambled through the window, and slid nimbly down the ladder. Willing hands were stretched out to meet him, and to relieve him of his burden.

They carried it along the terrace, Young Summers following behind, until they reached the extreme eastern wing of the building. Hesitating a moment to enter, they looked round to where the fire was burning. Already the flames were subdued. One wing had been entirely destroyed, but they were checked for the moment by the solid masonry of the main building which confronted them. A fire-engine had rattled up, and was now at work; the little stream at the bottom of the garden gave a plentiful supply of water.

Seeing this, the men entered the house, and laid their burden on a couch in a little room close by. Young Summers crept forward, and gazed at the face of the girl to whom he was whispering such sweet words of love only a short time since. He started back with an exclamation of horror. Surely there was some mistake? This was not Miss Kennedy; this thing that lay before him, with hideous drawn face, white and seared, and shorn of the adorning crown of hair. Could he believe his eyes? He called for someone to bring a lamp, but at that moment a bright gleam of sunlight crept through a chink in the shutters, and shone full on the face of the girl before him. With a low moan of agony, Summers sank senseless on the floor.

* * *

Six days later Summers was closeted with his friend Johnson. He had told him all the story from beginning to end; how he had first fallen in love with the girl's pretty face when she was acting her famous tragedy at the New Theatre; how he had met her again at his mother's house; how he had spent one delightful afternoon and evening in her company; and then how cruel Fate had stretched out her relentless hands and torn her from him; and, lastly, how he had turned with horror from the mangled thing his eyes had gazed on.

He ended up pitifully enough: "The doctors say she will never look the same again. Her face will bear the scars to the grave. Her beautiful hair will never grow again." He covered his face with his hands and groaned aloud: "My lady of the glistening tresses!"

"But your love," said Johnson, trying to speak firmly, "your love is still as constant——"

The figure before him shuddered as if with ague.

"I think," said Summers, "that I must go abroad for a year or two. Perhaps then it will come back to me."

J. Marcus.

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My Adventure with a Tiger.

"We were travelling along the north branch of the Gadavey River—sometimes upon its banks and again a couple of miles from the water, sometimes travelling five or six miles a day, and again halting for a couple of days to fish or shoot—when a most singular incident befel me individually.

"I had left camp at an early hour in the morning for the purpose of fishing. While I carried my rifle with me, I had no intention of going out of my way to find game. On the previous afternoon I had observed what seemed to be a capital spot in the bend of the river, and it was to this place I hastened as I left camp. Some of the native servants were astir and saw me set out, but I did not want their services. It was pretty thick jungle between the camp and the bend, but at the bend there was a clear spot of an acre in extent with a heavy forest growth and a ledge of rocks for a background.

"As I took a look round before sitting down on the bank to my sport, I remarked that it was a good spot for wild beasts, but as there was nothing moving, I went right to work with my fishing tackle. Catching a frog for bait, I flung in the hook, and it wasn't five minutes before I was meeting with such luck, that all thoughts of tigers, snakes, jackals, and hyenas, were driven out of my mind.

"I had landed half-a-dozen good-sized fish, and was just then playing a larger one, when a slight noise startled me, and I looked round to see such a sight as has seldom come to the eyes of a sportsman. A full-grown tiger was within five feet of me, playing with one of the fish. It was the last one pulled out, and in its dying agonies it was jumping about on the grass. Every time it moved the tiger would reach out a paw in a playful way, and once or twice he struck hard enough to move the fish three or four feet.

"I tell you I was a badly-frightened man, and all I could do was to sit there with mouth and eyes open. The tiger had crept down from the bluffs, and why he hadn't attacked me was a mystery. He went from fish to fish, turning them over with his paw, and time and again brushing me with his tail as he moved about. My rifle was ten feet away, leaning against a bush, and I might have been idiot enough to try and reach it but for a warning.

"My personal servant had followed me to see what luck I had. He came into the neighbourhood while the tiger was playing with the fish, and softly climbing a tree, he uttered the call of a bird to attract my attention, and then sang out: 'Do nothing to provoke the tiger, master. He is a *hiloweele*, and if you do not cross him he will go away.' He meant that the spirit of a good nature had been transformed, and it was clearly the common sense way to follow his advice.

"As the beast gave me no attention I turned to the fish tugging at the end of my line, and landed him. He was of good size and full of vitality, and the tiger waited in a playful way until I removed the hook and threw the fish on the grass. Then he sprang for it as a kitten would for a ball of yarn, and he played with it in the same way. It was laughable, in spite of the circumstances, to witness his actions.

"He would run round in circles, as you have seen a young dog do, sometimes almost leaping over me, and then again he would become the cat, and creep softly forward to pounce upon one of the fish. Each one as caught was flung to him, and it was a full half-hour before he grew tired of the sport. I expected he would turn to me sooner or later, but the native saw the change of demeanour first, and called: 'Master, the *hiloweele* is going to play with you. Be as clay in his power.'

"The tiger suddenly left the last fish landed and came stalking over to me, purring like a cat, and acting very playfully. His first move was to worm his head under my left arm, and I'm telling you the solemn truth when I say that I smoothed down his fur as if he had been a favourite dog. I had on a big straw hat, and this he got hold of in his teeth, and played with it for ten minutes, or, until he had torn it all to pieces. I had no more bait to fish with, and sat there waiting for the tiger's next move.

"When he had finished the hat he came over an rubbed his head against me, and purred in a pleased way, and I rubbed him with my hand from nose to tail. I gradually got over my scare, but was yet very anxious to know how the affair would end. The sun was getting well up and very hot, and the beast would soon be seeking his lair. In about thirty minutes from the time he appeared the tiger began to show a change of demeanour. He became nervous and uneasy, and the hair on his back stood up at intervals. I judged that he had got the scent of my servant, and such proved to be the case.

"I dared not rise to my feet, but I made up my mind that if the tiger attacked me I should make a spring off the bank into the river. It was infested with crocodiles, but there was not much choice between being eaten by beast or saurian.

"Once the tiger glared at me and growled, but the next moment whined as if afraid, and edged up towards me as if for protection. The servant had been keeping a watchful eye on my strange playmate, and he now believed the time had come for decisive action. He therefore fired his pistol, and shouted at the top of his voice. The effect was immediate. The beast dropped his tail, uttered a long-drawn whine, and with a sort of farewell glance at me he bolted for the forest and disappeared. I had looked him over pretty well, and had noticed, among other things, that he had a broken claw on the right paw. We did not break camp that day.

"Just before sunset, as we sat in groups smoking our pipes, a tiger charged boldly in among the servants and seized one and attempted to make off. We rallied to prevent, and the beast knocked two other men over before he was dispatched. When we came to examine the body I had not the slightest difficulty in identifying it as that of my playmate of the morning."

H. P. Leggett.

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The First Night.

"I wonder if there is any truth in an 'evil genius.' Perhaps after all it's merely coincidence, that whenever you meet a certain member of your acquaintance some fatality invariably occurs."

Mrs. Alleyn sipped her wine a trifle nervously.

"You have not eaten a mouthful of lunch," said Lady Susannah. "Have you seen him to-day?"

"Who?" asked Mrs. Alleyn, a trifle sharply.

"Why, the evil genius, of course."

"Oh! no!"

"I suppose it's that man Scourloudi?"

"Y—es," speaking hesitatingly.

"A woman would not be interesting enough to come under that category. I expect you are feeling thoroughly excited and highly strung to-day. I ought not to have come."

"Your quiet influence, my dear Susannah, has done me a world of good. You are so optimistic. When you arrived my nerves were simply on wires, but they have gradually calmed. I don't know why I suddenly thought of my evil genius. I've not seen him for more than a year, though everything has been going badly with us. If he appeared to-night," with a little shudder, "I think I should *scream!*"

"Please don't, for it is not at all unlikely. I suppose a man about town may drop into the theatre, without necessarily bringing ruin in his train."

"Not Scourloudi!" muttered Mrs. Alleyn.

"But do you honestly, with or without Scourloudi, imagine poor dear Arthur will be a success?" Lady Susannah asked the question abruptly and deliberately.

Mrs. Alleyn opened her questioning grey eyes a trifle wider, and gave a slight gasp of surprise.

"Why, yes. It will be the most terrible thing for us if he has a frost. But I do not see how the play *can* fail under Arthur's management, and with Arthur in the leading part. Don't you remember how splendid he was in those theatricals Captain Stammers got up at Norton Hall?"

"We certainly had great fun over them."

"Yes, how jolly we were then, before grim poverty laid us low!"

Mrs. Alleyn took up a macaroon and bit it leisurely. "You see, Susannah, we are dreadfully poor—quite at our last ebb. But I still had some money to invest, which Aunt Gertrude left me. Arthur said that nothing is certain now, and to speculate in these troubled times is simply madness. So I decided to take a theatre and let Arthur run a Society play. Of course, it costs a lot, but then *think* of the profits. He has such heaps of friends, and is so well known, that the house is sure to be crowded. I can't tell you what a lot of people have written for tickets on the first night. But it's silly to brag, you wait till this evening, and see for yourself."

Lady Susannah smiled.

"What does his father think of it?"

"Oh! he is simply mad, declares it is lowering the family name, dragging it through the mire. He even had the cruelty to say Arthur was bound to make a fool of himself."

"I can just picture Lord Alleyn holding forth on the subject—what a joke!"

"I don't see that it is the least funny."

"I suppose Arthur is very busy to-day?"

"Oh! yes, I've not seen him since the morning. He promised to be back before six. But if anything prevents him, I shall go to the theatre alone. Mind you are there in good time to support me, Susannah. You know the number of the box?"

"Yes. Try not to fuss, or think too much about it, but lie down and rest till tea. You look as white as a sheet."

"There is no repose for the wicked," laughed Mrs. Alleyn, pushing back the fair curls from her forehead, and fanning herself with a lace pocket-handkerchief. "It is my 'At Home' day, unfortunately."

"You poor thing!" said Lady Susannah sympathetically as they went upstairs. "Forgive me running away directly, but I only popped in to wish you good luck."

"I say—Susannah—do *you* think—it's—low?"

"Not at all. Lady Stobart's daughter is at a tailor's *maison*, parading about in black satin, and taking orders. I would rather have a husband on the stage than a daughter in a shop. It is quite fashionable 'to do something.' If the craze lasts, I shall have to think myself out a profession. Ta-ta!"

An hour later Mrs Alleyn was doing her best to converse with a dozen or more vivacious females at the same time. She looked prettily pale in her soft green chiffon fichu and elegant silk gown.

They came and went, a succession of gaily-attired butterflies, while a sense of hopeless fatigue crept over Mrs. Alleyn. All her thoughts were with Arthur.

She was just hoping that the last batch of callers had arrived, when the door again opened, and a name fell on her ears that froze her blood and stopped the breath she was about to draw.

"Mr. Scourloudi!"

For the moment she dared not turn, but steadied herself with one trembling hand against the mantelpiece. Then, slowly raising her eyes, she stepped forward and felt the magnetic touch of a man's hand.

Scourloudi was tall, and dark as the night. His thick black eyebrows made her think of bands of crape. He smiled cynically, and glanced round the room.

Whether Mrs. Alleyn's agitation was visible or not she couldn't tell, but the few remaining visitors simultaneously took their leave. She said good-bye mechanically, and motioned the newcomer to a chair.

It was with an effort that she addressed him in ordinary society tones.

"I have not seen you for over a year, Mr. Scourloudi. This is quite a surprise."

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"No, I have been abroad, studying science, chiefly in Paris."

"Testing the powers of 'brain versus brain?'"

"Yes. I wanted to see you alone, and I *made* these people go. It is a useful gift to cultivate."

He showed his white teeth as he spoke.

"It was really very kind of you," replied Mrs. Alleyn lightly, forcing a smile; "they bored me to death."

"Not quite. Let me feel your pulse; you are still alive!"

Mrs. Alleyn drew her hand away sharply.

"Don't!" she said.

His presence affected her strangely, partly from a mild form of superstition, but more especially because he had such a powerful influence over her.

"Is it true," he asked suddenly, "that your husband has taken the —— Theatre, and is going to appear himself to-night?"

"Yes."

"What strange fads you rich people adopt in search of diversion!"

"This is a money, not a pleasure scheme," vouchsafed Mrs. Alleyn.

"And you have every confidence in it?"

As he looked at her, the hopes with which she had buoyed herself up, the confidence inspired by Arthur's assurances that all would go well, and that the piece was "rippin'," faded like the fabric of a dream. She could never act to Scourloudi, his eyes made that impossible.

"I—I am frightened," she murmured, clasping her hands. "It means so much to us. We must have money, but I would sooner relinquish that than see Arthur an object of ridicule. Yet what can we say? He courts criticism; it is the penalty of publicity. The suspense is terrible," passing her hands over her brow. "I wish," leaning back against the sofa cushions and sighing deeply, "that I could go to sleep until it is all over."

"There was a princess in an old fairy tale that had only to 'wish,' and her desires were all fulfilled." He was staring her straight in the eyes, watching the nervous twitching of her lips.

"How delightful! If only I were that princess!"

Ten minutes later the bell rang, and as the servant mounted the stairs, Scourloudi appeared on the landing. "I know my way," turning back to speak to Mrs. Alleyn. "Good-bye, and good luck for to-night." Then the servant turned and preceded him to the hall.

* * * * *

Mrs. Alleyn sat back behind the box curtain, and surveyed the crowded house through her opera glasses.

Lady Susannah smiled significantly. Something in her face irritated the Hon. Arthur Alleyn's excitable little wife.

A tall, imposing figure entered the stalls and sat quite near the stage box. It was Scourloudi.

Susannah pointed to him with her fan.

"Your evil genius," she whispered, "come to use his influence against you."

"I mastered it this afternoon," replied Mrs. Alleyn. "I can defy him now. You will see that even the presence of Scourloudi cannot mar my husband's triumph."

She spoke proudly, though the eyes of the man below were riveted upon her firmly. She returned the glance with a low laugh.

Her lips were still smiling as the curtain rose.

She watched the progress of the play in ecstatic delight, following Arthur's every movement entranced.

Rounds of applause greeted him at every turn; not one of his points failed to tell on an enthusiastic and appreciative audience.

After the final scene her cup of happiness was full; her heart swelled as she heard the shouts for her husband: "Alleyn! Alleyn!"

He advanced before the footlights, bowed, smiled, and appeared about to speak. He opened his lips, but no voice came; he struggled to utter, yet only a few incoherent sounds escaped him. It was a moment of direst suffering for his wife. She gazed from her box amazed and horrified, then covered her face with her hands, and sprang to her feet. As she did so a sharp cry broke from her lips, and she awoke.

Mrs. Alleyn sat up on the sofa and stared round the empty drawing-room. She was in exactly the same place as when she had last spoken to Scourloudi, but she could not remember falling asleep, nor the fact of his leaving her. The dream still held the uppermost place in her mind. Then gradually the words she had heedlessly spoken returned: "I wish I could sleep until it is all over!"

Was it possible Scourloudi had taken them seriously, and put her off into a mesmeric slumber? If so, what was the hour, and where was Arthur? She turned on the electric light, and stared at the clock. *Half-past nine!*

Why, the piece would have begun over an hour ago.

Still dazed and bewildered she pealed the bell.

A trim maid with very wide opened eyes, and astonished brows answered the summons.

"When did Mr. Alleyn come in?" asked his wife anxiously.

"He has not been back at all, ma'am. I came to wake you for dinner, but you were sleeping so soundly I couldn't."

Arthur had been detained then. What would he think of her non-appearance? How could she tell him she had over-slept herself? It was utterly incomprehensible!

"When did Mr. Scourloudi leave?" she asked vaguely, feeling more foolish than she had ever done in her life.

"About five o'clock, ma'am. You rang for me to show him out."

"He did that for himself," thought Mrs. Alleyn.

"Will you dine now?"

The question seemed to bring her suddenly to her senses.

"Dine!" She scoffed at the idea.

"Bring me a cloak, and whistle for a hansom at once," she cried. "I must go to the theatre just as I am."

She seized the evening wrap the maid brought her, flung it about her shoulders, rushed down the stairs, and into a passing hansom.

"Drive with all your might to the —— Theatre," she said.

The evening air blew on her forehead, now burning with suspense. To think that Arthur was at that very moment making his first appearance on the London boards, without her being present. How dare Scourloudi! Was it, perhaps, that he knew Arthur would fail, and wished to spare her the pain of witnessing his humiliation, and hearing the mocking jeers? Her heart beat faster. How rapidly the horse sped over the wood pavement, yet it seemed slow—slow!

Ah, now they were turning the corner, and the flaring lights of the "house" would meet her fevered vision.

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She gazed up the street, but the theatre was shrouded in darkness, yet she saw by the roadside lamps the placards with her husband's name outside.

"P'r'aps we've come to the wrong theatre," the cabby suggested.

"Can't you read? It is written up in plain English—the date—the name—everything!"

She sprang back into the hansom. "Drive me to the stage door—quick!"

A moment later, and she was out again, only to find that entrance closed also.

She rapped furiously in a frenzy of apprehension.

Eventually it was opened by a man in evening dress.

He seemed to be in a hurry, and was shrugging his body in to a long overcoat.

There was an expression of intense annoyance on his face; his lips were compressed and cigarless, though he carried a smouldering end of a "Bock" between his fingers.

"What has happened?" asked Mrs. Alleyn, catching her breath.

He glanced at her suspiciously, then recognising the manager's wife, took off his hat, and muttered: "Good-evening."

She repeated her question.

"You haven't heard?"

His words were incredulous. Mrs. Alleyn shook her head. She was too overcome to speak.

"It's all up, for to-night at least!" he muttered hopelessly, "yet we are in the dark still."

"Where is my husband?"

"Don't *you* know?" he cried wonderingly.

Mrs. Alleyn trembled. "Tell me," she said hoarsely.

"About an hour before the doors should have opened, we had a telegram from Mr. Alleyn, saying: 'Close the house, return the public their money, there must be no play to-night.' He has not been near the place yet. We have seen nothing of him!"

Mrs. Alleyn made no sign. She stood as one petrified, till she noticed two or three small urchins gaping at her under the shadow of the wall. The sight of their pinched yet curious faces reminded her that she was hatless in a London side-street, staring into a comparative stranger's eyes.

"When was he last seen?"

"Here, late in the afternoon. Everything was satisfactorily prepared. Green, the call-boy, declares he saw him at Waterloo station about six, with a lady. But he is not very reliable in his statements."

These words were enough for Mrs. Alleyn. She asked no more, but turned away dizzily. She stepped back into the cab, seeing nothing, and drove home through the busy night, utter perplexity, numbness and despair creeping over her shocked senses. She did not know what to think. Ruin, infidelity, all things terrible and disgraceful, presented themselves in turn to her mind.

"Has Mr. Alleyn returned?" she asked, as she staggered, weak and white, into the dimly-lighted hall.

"No, ma'am."

She walked slowly into the dining-room. Their supper was spread, supper for two!

"Bring me the 'Bradshaw,'" she said faintly.

If Arthur did not return before the morning, she would take an early train to Beveree, and ask Lord Alleyn's advice. He was angry with his son she knew, but his heart was in the right place, and he always had a soft spot for Arthur's little wife. He was besides a man of strong common sense and much activity. In an emergency she felt she could rely on Lord Alleyn.

There was a train that left at seven a.m.

All through the long weary hours of darkness Alice Alleyn waited downstairs, listening to every passing footstep, and watching each conveyance that rumbled through the square. But no sign came.

The long drawn out suspense grew more unendurable. She paced the room, or sat in mute agony, with her face pressed against the window. At half-past five she went to her room and changed her silk dress to one of sombre cloth. She found some slight relief in activity, and by seven o'clock was weeping silently in the corner of a first-class carriage, with a ticket to Beveree tucked in her black suède glove. It comforted her to cry, for all night her eyes had been dry and burning, her cheeks tearless.

What would her aristocratic old father-in-law, in his ancient home on Beveree Hill, think of her sudden arrival and melancholy tale?

She tried to picture how he would take it, but her imagination failed to paint a convincing scene. By the time the train stopped at the country station, she had worked herself into a fever of apprehension. No sort of conveyance awaited her, and the morning being bright and sunny, she determined to walk. How ironically the hedge sparrows twittered. With what mockery the early sunbeams glistened through the trees! At last she reached the end of the long avenue and rang the clanging bell.

The door opened simultaneously. She rushed forward with a cry:

"*Arthur!*"

"You are too late," he said, putting his arms round her gently. Then she noticed his pale face, and haggard sleepless eyes, still laughing aloud with pure joy, and a sudden reaction from bitterest fear.

"Why did you do it? What does it all mean?" she asked, clinging to him like a child.

"Didn't you get the message I sent you?" leading her to a seat in the hall. She sank upon it gladly.

"No!"

"I have been up with our poor father all night. Florence and I came down together. He had a fatal accident, riding, and died about half-an-hour ago."

Alice gazed at him in horror. She could hardly believe the words.

Arthur seemed to be struggling with his emotion. He answered the questioning look in his wife's eyes.

"Oh! yes, dear, we made it up. He was conscious to the last. I swore never to disregard his dying request, and my dream of the drama has vanished. He talked of it last night when I arrived, with a certain grim humour through his pain.

"'The bay fiend has smashed me up in time to stop *that*, eh, my boy?' he gasped feebly. And then, with a choke in his voice, he sent for the will, out of which, in a moment of anger, he cut the 'play actor,' and added a codicil, after receiving my word to renounce the stage."

"Oh! Arthur, why did we ever think of it?" sobbed his wife.

* * * * *

So the Alleyns lived on in independence, and the world was deprived of the privilege of criticising a peer's son.

Among Alice's letters of condolence came one from Scourloudi, in which he trusted she might sleep peacefully through all the evils of life, and only wake to Fortune's smile.

"I am going away" he concluded. "for a long season. *Adieu, et puis bon soir!*" W. G.

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When The Birds Begin To Sing.

By Winifred Graham. *Author of "Through the Valley," "Six First-Class Passengers," etc.*

SUMMARY.

Philip Roche marries Eleanor Grebby, daughter of a farmer, and they spend their honeymoon on the Continent. On their return to Richmond, Eleanor becomes friendly with a frivolous widow, Mrs. Mounteagle, against her husband's wishes. She is introduced to Carol Quinton, who fascinates her. Her husband is heart-broken, and consults his cousin, Erminie Henderson, who comes to stay with them. Eleanor's parents come to spend a day or two with her, and disgust Mrs. Mounteagle with their homeliness. Nelson Lane and Erminie are engaged. Each is led to think the other rich, but the deceit is mutual. In order to right themselves in one another's eyes, they each, unknown to the other, speculate in mining shares. Eleanor is induced to lunch at the Savoy with Carol Quinton. They there meet Mrs. Mounteagle and her *fiancé*, Herbert Dallison. Philip appears on the scene, and Eleanor and Herbert change tables. Philip afterwards discovers that the meeting between his wife and Carol was not accidental, and, on the recommendation of Erminie, suggests that Eleanor should return to her parents at Copthorne for a time.

CHAPTER XIII.

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow.—Shakespeare.

Eleanor is superintending her packing, when Giddy Mounteagle enters her room.

"I called and ran straight up, dear," she says, "knowing you were busy. What! are you only taking so small a trunk into the country?"

"Yes, no finery, only two stuff dresses and a felt hat. I want to forget there is such a thing as society or 'toilettes.' I am going to have a good time with all the farm people, and the school children, and be just as I was before I married. There are some of my clothes still hanging up in my old room, I shall put them on, and grub in the garden, rake, weed, and mow. Our poor machine was dreadfully cranky before I left, I should think it has fallen to pieces by now, but I mean to have a try. Mother's bit of front lawn is the pride of her heart. Black Bess will meet me at the station, and Rover—dear affectionate dog. I shall swing on the gate and whistle, and——"

But Eleanor's prattle breaks off shortly, for her throat feels strangled, and the misery that Giddy clearly sees beneath her smiles, overmasters her.

"I think I have got a cold," she falters; "my eyes water so, and I have a little husk here when I speak."

But Giddy knows it is the coldness of desolation that brings the raindrops to shine on Eleanor's lashes.

"Do put in a few dainty gowns, dearest," she implores. "It would be such fun to show them off and astonish the natives. Say that hat from 'Louise,' in case you tea with the vicar's spouse, of whom I have often heard."

Eleanor is too weary to object, and lets Giddy order Sarah hither and thither till the room is in a litter and her head in a whirl.

"Go and fetch me Mrs. Roche's Roumanian jacket, the one from Liberty," says Giddy to Sarah. "I want to borrow it as a pattern. I am sure that nice little dressmaker at Twickenham could make me one exactly like it," turning to Eleanor, as Sarah quits the room. "You don't mind, dear?"

"Oh, no."

"Did I tell you I met Lady MacDonald yesterday, and she actually asked after you? I was quite surprised. She is in great trouble, poor thing, having lost her favourite maid—a regular right hand in the household. The woman had a very good figure, and has gone to the Empire, and gets £4 a week for standing in the front row of a ballet or chorus or something. Lady MacDonald feels sure she must have been in the trade before she entered her service. She gets that excellent pay because she just matches another girl, like a horse you know. It must be vastly more entertaining than fastening Lady MacDonald's back hooks. The worst of it is she *will* tell all the other servants about it, and make them envious. The scullery maid, who is short and broad, and stout, is fired to go, and dreams of nothing else."

"I wonder the beautiful Lady MacDonald has time to trouble about the dreams of a menial," says Eleanor, with the touch of sarcasm that always accompanies any mention of Giddy's friend.

Sarah returns, and the subject drops.

"Is it not a pity Philip is dreadfully busy this week, or he was to have come with me to-day," continues Eleanor. "I doubt now if he will be able to get to Copthorne at all."

"How like a husband to be busy when you want him. I am sure you are much too young and pretty to travel alone."

"Shall we leave Sarah to finish the packing, and come down? I must have an early lunch."

Giddy follows her to the dining-room.

"I saw Carol Quinton yesterday," she says. "I told him you were going away, but was true to my word, and did not divulge the address."

"I wish you had said nothing about my movements," replies Eleanor uneasily, starting at the sound of Carol's name.

"I could not help it, he asked me all about you directly; he never talks of anything else, which seems rather absurd to another woman."

"Yes, you must grow horribly tired of the subject."

"You remember that dance at the 'Star and Garter' that

Eleanor's prattle breaks off shortly.

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you didn't go to? Well, I only heard the other day from those 'Bennett-Jones' girls that he asked them if you would be there, and they said 'yes,' just because they wanted him to make their party complete; they took three men and three girls. They knew really that you had a previous engagement, but kept buoying him up all the evening by expecting your momentary appearance. Later on, Addie, the eldest, broke it to him that you had never intended going. He was so offended he went straight home, aud has not called on them since. It was rather mean you know to lure him there under false pretences."

"When did they tell you that?"

"Oh! the next day Addie called about ten in the morning, before I was down. She was really quite funny about it."

Eleanor bites her lips.

"It seems that my name is coupled with Mr. Quinton's," she mutters.

"Well, people will talk, whatever you do. Little Mrs. Hope saw you walking with him in the park one day, and she told Addie, and Addie told——"

"Oh! don't," cries Eleanor impatiently, putting her hands to her racking head, and stamping her foot impatiently. "I would rather not hear. It is all so petty, so stupid, so mean. What have I or Carol Quinton to do with them?"

"You have flirted with him, my dear, so openly at the Richmond parties, you can scarcely expect to escape observation."

"I hate the people here—I hate everybody!" declares Eleanor passionately. "I shall be thankful to get away. There are no gossiping fools to drive me crazy at Copthorne."

"How delightful! Fancy wandering about with a cow for your chaperon and the birds for critics, a rural pasture for your ballroom, a buttercup meadow for your lounge! How long shall you stay in 'Happy Arcadia'?"

"As long as I can," replies Eleanor. "I should like never to come back, and when I do I will take good care I am not seen with Mr. Quinton. It is all this silly girls' talk that eventually reaches Philip's ears, and makes our home unbearable."

"Yes, Eleanor. The breath of scandal permeates through the stolidest walls, or perhaps it comes in by the keyhole. It is a germ that is spread by chattering tongues, like some deadly disease. It nearly ruined my life when I was young."

"What a pity it cannot be taxed," sighs Eleanor. "By the way, the last thing I heard was that you had broken your engagement with Bertie. Of course I did not believe it."

"Which was distinctly wrong of you under the circumstances. I am disappointed in him. We have decided to go our separate paths—apart."

"Oh! Giddy I am so sorry. But why?"

"When I marry (which I shall do some day again), I want a rising man, clever, pushing, ambitious, like Lord MacDonald, in fact. Someone who will improve my position, lift me, instead of being a burden. Bertie's intellect was very weak, and I do hate a fool!"

"I should have thought that would be rather an advantage in a husband," remarks Eleanor.

"Really Bertie was too expensive, he wanted so much pocket money, I could not afford the luxury of a *fiancé* on his terms. Of course he is broken-hearted, dear boy, and naturally I wept a few poetical tears, and said I should always think of him as a friend."

"Poor Bertie! I am sorry for him," says Eleanor. "I cannot bear to hear of anyone loving in vain, it is such horrible suffering."

She is thinking of herself and Carol Quinton.

"Human hearts are regulated in a very unsatisfactory manner. Are you sure you have had enough lunch?" as Eleanor pushes her untasted food away, and sips her sherry.

"The carriage is at the door," she replies, "they are getting the luggage down."

Eleanor and Giddy go into the hall together.

As Sarah carries the dressing bag out, it flies open, and something falls at Mrs. Mounteagle's feet.

She picks it up.

It is a photograph of Carol Quinton.

"You must have that lock secured," she says laughing, "or buy a strap."

Eleanor colours, and hides the photograph in her muff.

"Good-bye, Giddy."

"Take care of yourself, my sweet," returning Eleanor's caress. "I have no doubt it will be very *merry* and *jolly* in the country," with a little grimace that means it won't.

But Mrs. Roche cares not to what corner of the globe she is travelling as the train bears her to Copthorne. She is too utterly miserable to notice places or seasons. She just sits by the window, and stares at the picture she has drawn from her muff, from which the eyes of Carol Quinton look pleadingly in hers.

"I wish I could bury myself," she thinks, her mind turning to Africa—America—Asia—any of the far off worlds she has read of in geography books and fiction. "I wish I were someone else, or even the old Eleanor that Philip stole from Copthorne Farm. Why did he not leave me there? It would have been far better for us both!"

An elderly woman seated opposite glances at Eleanor over her paper, struck by the strange pallor of the young face, the nervous twitching of the mouth, and tear-dimmed eyes.

The stranger leans forward suddenly with an abrupt question.

"May I see that photograph?"

Eleanor starts in trepidation; her thoughts have been so far away that they are brought back to the present with an effort.

She sees before her a face lined more deeply with sorrow than time, a woman who might still have considerable beauty had she not dyed her hair in her youth and ruined her complexion with cosmetics.

The request does not offend Eleanor, for Mrs. Roche is easily won by a kind look or a smile.

She hands the photograph across, watching the stranger's expression.

"What a handsome face!" she exclaims, with a little gasp of admiration.

"Yes," sighs Eleanor.

"I never saw such mesmeric eyes, and yet they are soft, though powerful. I should say that man must have broken many a heart with those eyes."

She looks shrewdly at Mrs. Roche as she speaks.

"If he loves *you*," she continues, "he will be true."

Eleanor's head droops.

"You love him," said the stranger, reading the tell-tale blush. "Are you going to marry him, my dear?"

"No," falters Eleanor, "I wish I could."

"Ah! I thought so. Forgive me for my curiosity, but your face interested me, and I am not conventional. I always speak if I wish, though it offends some people. To me the fashion of introducing seems absurd. Here we are all jumbled up together in the same little world, yet everyone is a mass of reserve, a mind in armour, they never say what they mean, seldom speak from the heart. One is in the dust, and another on the throne, and they all die in like manner, to be buried most probably by a man they would not have dared address without an introduction, measured by an undertaker they could not have been seen walking with in the street, and to mix with thousands of spirits whose ancestors and pedigree are unknown."

Eleanor listens in surprise.

"Are you uncertain about your future?" the stranger asks.

"A little," falters Eleanor nervously.

"Then let me look at your hand, I may be able to help you. No, the left hand please," as Mrs. Roche tremblingly unbuttons her right glove. "Ah!" as the gold wedding ring is revealed, "I was afraid so. I see it all now, this, (pointing to the photograph), is *not* your husband."

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"This is not your husband."

Eleanor tries to speak, but her throat is parched, and dry. She only bends her head and gazes at the lines in her pink palm.

"You are going on a journey very soon," vouchsafes the stranger. "I wish it could be prevented, for it brings more pain than pleasure—misery, desolation."

Eleanor snatches away her hand.

"I don't want to know any more," she says, almost fiercely, pulling on her glove.

"I did not mean to frighten you," replies the women penitently. "But I want to warn you. Whatever you do wrong in this world, my friend, is always repaid. There may be a heaven and a hell in the hereafter, I know not, I am not in a position to say, but of one thing I am certain, there is the hell here on earth, which measures out the allotted punishment to its victims."

"I don't understand you," exclaims Eleanor. "You talk to me as if I were a criminal."

"No," shaking her head sadly; "only as to a young and beautiful wife, who dreams and cries over another man's picture. You have the fatal, dangerous gift of fascination, Mrs. Roche."

"How did you know my name?"

"It is by me on the label of your bag."

Eleanor is silent. She waits for the stranger to continue.

"In my youth, Mrs. Roche, I was as fair as you—I was unhappily married. I looked lightly on the bonds that meant so much until they fettered me—held me down, as I then imagined. Between me and my husband the sentiment of *camaraderie* never existed. When I was not coquetting with him I was quarrelling. I tell you this because I shall never see you again. You do not know me—or care. I may be dead to-morrow—you would never hear. We are only just passing in life, and have paused to speak. The man I married was by necessity a preoccupied breadwinner, and during his daily absences in hot pursuit of the staff of life I met—well, we will say this man," taking up the photograph of Carol Quinton.

Eleanor snatches it from her.

"Ah! yes, just what I should have done then. I was hot-headed, and reckless, I had a good life in my hands and I ruined, spoiled, destroyed it! The cruel thongs of public opinion lashed my quivering flesh, the galling retribution broke my spirit, I cried to God, but He hid His face, I was an outcast, lost, I could only lie and moan for death which never came."

The stranger covers her face with her hands, and shudders visibly.

The wedding ring to which she has no right, is still on her wasted finger, hot tears, forced from her eyes through recollection, pour down her drawn cheeks, making little rivulets through some coarse powder of the cheaper kind.

Eleanor's ever-ready pity rises up to crush the anger previously felt, for she sees now the effort that this brief confession has cost her fellow traveller. She knows, too, the reason for which these words were spoken, and horror stops the beating of her heart, it checks her throbbing pulses.

Mrs. Roche leans forward, and takes the stranger's hands.

"Thank you," she murmurs simply.

The woman clasps the little fingers gratefully.

"You understand?" she asks.

Eleanor whispers: "Yes."

"Do you know what I saw in your eyes?"

"No."

"Three long words that kept repeating themselves. All the same words, and the worst, the most heartbreaking. 'To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow!' They will drive a soul to perdition quicker than any in the English language. I am going to have them engraved on my tombstone, because I can only conquer them in death."

"You are right. I *was* looking on, living in fancy the worthless days and hours."

"Crush that tendency, Mrs. Roche. Think of *me* when your life seems worthless, and remember all that I have lost. Your face is so sweet, so pure, so beautiful, it was made for the good love that crowns spotless womanhood. But this is my station, and I shall never know what you do with your future."

"Shall I show you?" says Eleanor hastily, for she is easily swayed, and the stranger has worked upon her emotion.

"Yes."

"See!" and the soft, enticing eyes of Carol Quinton are torn asunder—the photograph is reduced to a handful of scraps scattered on the carriage cushion.

"You are a good woman," says the other rising and looking down tenderly, lovingly at Eleanor.

Again they clasp hands, then a cloud of towzled hair under a black crape bonnet vanishes down the platform, and Mrs. Roche is left alone, with the pieces of torn cardboard and the scent of patchouli on the opposite seat.

CHAPTER XIV.

If need, to die—not live.—Chas. Kingsley.

"Have *I* changed, or has everything changed?" Eleanor asks herself, as the days slip by in the old farmhouse.

Mr. and Mrs. Grebby are just the same warm-hearted, genial couple as of yore; they crack the same jokes at their knife-and-fork tea, while Rover wags his tail as pleasantly as ever, and Black Bess trots to market.

The school children have not forgotten "Teacher," and greet her in demonstrative fashion, flinging their small arms round her neck when she stoops to kiss them.

Yet Mrs. Roche finds that their mouths are sticky, and the little hands she clasps in hers hot and unpleasant to the touch.

She rises early, and on churning morning helps her mother even more industriously than in past days, yet her heart is heavy, and the old songs never pass her lips without a stifled sob. She tries to hum the "Miller of Dee," as for the sake of happy recollections she polishes afresh the pewter service on the parlour table, yet all the while her

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Flinging their small arms round her neck.

eyes are scrutinising the inartistic arrangement of the room. Why should the horsehair sofa be placed straight against the wall, and those ghastly wax flowers under glass covers adorn the stiff chimneypiece, which might be made so pretty? The memorial cards, that are framed and hung on the wall—how gruesome they appear in the spring sunshine! She longs to pull them down, and burn them, but to do so would be to violate poor Mrs. Grebby's most sacred feelings.

She looks in the old family Bible, standing in its accustomed place on a table by the window. There are the births, deaths, and marriages of the Grebby family for generations. Oh, if her marriage could be blotted out, and a date of death mark her name. She envies the twins that died in their infancy, when she—Eleanor—was only two years old.

The pewter pots tire her arm, unaccustomed now to rubbing anything but diamond trinkets. The service she so admired once does not attract her now. She puts it away half clean, and longs for a novel.

Vegetating was not very soothing after all. The poisoned arrows had followed her even to Copthorne, and their wounds could not heal. The thoughts she struggled to suppress, here in the dead calm, proclaimed themselves more loudly, worked fiercer havoc. She longs, pines, sickens for a sight of one she must never see, for a voice it would be death to hear, the touch of a hand it were sin to clasp.

So she wanders about in her strange state of depression, pretending to enjoy the glorious green of the spring, and seeing only light and darkness, cold and desolation, in primrose banks and rippling streams.

Mr. Grebby is too preoccupied with his cattle and his land to notice the change in Eleanor, while Mrs. Grebby takes infinite pains to give her married daughter the best their house affords, and only remarks on her lack of appetite, at which she loudly laments.

"You 'aint eatin' anything, dearie," she says one morning at breakfast. "Try a tumbler of new milk to put some strength into you. It's them towns as makes you pale and spiritless. I knows 'em. We was that done up after our visit to you and cousin Harriett, it was quite surprisin'. But law, how Pa did make me walk in London. Up them Monument steps, and down again before I'd got my breath, with poor Rover in charge of a policeman below, and everyone a laughing 'cause I was puffing so."

Eleanor forces a smile. She was watching for the post.

The moment the man's tread is heard on the gravel she starts up and runs to the door, dreading every day that Giddy may divulge her address.

She longs to write to Carol Quinton, but dare not. She knows she is too weak to run the risk.

There are two letters for her, one from Philip, the other from Mrs. Mounteagle.

She reads Giddy's first.

It is amusing and frivolous as usual. The last half, however, amazes Eleanor.

"I am going to be married," it says in the middle of a description of a new bonnet. "My future husband is a wealthy man and a general. Congratulate me! It will not be a long engagement, as he is seventy-five to-morrow, but loves with the ardour of a seventeen year old! Talking of boys, I am asking Bertie to be best man. By this you will see all arrangements for the ceremony are being left entirely to my management. It will be costly and elaborate. My gown alone would have swallowed up dear Bertie's income. I have given him a splendid new watch to console him, as his was snatched last year at Epsom. I met my General at Lady MacDonald's. He moves in a very good set—gout permitting. Excuse my humour.—Your elated and strong-minded Giddy.

"P.S.—Don't you think I am a noble woman? He is one eye short, which is rather a recommendation, but *has* been one of the handsomest men about town."

"How strange," thinks Eleanor. Then she throws the letter aside in disgust. "And very loathsome!" she adds tearing open Philip's envelope.

She reads it slowly at the breakfast table.

"Philip is coming this evening," she says.

Mr. and Mrs. Grebby clap their hands.

"Well, now, I'm right glad," they exclaim together. "We could see 'ow you missed 'im, dearie."

Eleanor feels uncomfortably guilty. What *if* they knew that her every thought was wandering to another!

"'Cause I was puffing so."

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Already she has begun to try and piece the photograph together again, regretting her hasty action in the railway carriage. Before reaching Copthorne she had hidden the fragments safely in a corner of her dressing-bag. She hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry that Philip is coming. It will break the dull monotony of the day. At any rate she will get herself up to look as much like the old Eleanor as possible, though the thought of wandering with him through the haunts of past days is distasteful.

She knows it will please *him*, however; so, crushing her own feelings, she dons an old dress made by the village dressmaker, one which has hung in her wardrobe ever since she left home, then proceeds to search for the long disused sun bonnet.

The day is almost bright enough to excuse the picturesque headgear, eventually unearthed from the bottom of a tin trunk, and ironed by Eleanor's own hands.

She feels as if she were dressed up for amateur theatricals, and even denies herself the fashionable manner in which her hair is now arranged, going back to the simple style, before she knew London or Giddy Mounteagle.

"It certainly *is* becoming," she says; "beauty unadorned," viewing her charms in this rustic guise before a cracked mirror. "Yet I wonder what the Richmond girls would think of me if I walked on the Terrace, Sunday morning after church, dressed like this?"

She looks so pretty that her heart sinks at the thought that it is Philip, not Carol, for whom she has prepared.

As she comes down the stairs Mrs. Grebby meets her pale and trembling.

"What is the matter, mammy?" asks Eleanor, seeing that her mother is trying to gain breath for speech.

Mrs. Grebby puts her hand to her heart.

"There, there, child!" she says, "don't be frightened," while her legs seem sinking under her, and she grasps Eleanor's arm for support. "But the man from the post-office, 'e—'e's brought a telegram for you."

"Anything wrong at home?" asks Mrs. Roche.

"Not that I know of—*yet*," continues the shaking woman; "it hasn't been opened."

Eleanor bursts out laughing, and the amused peal reassures Mrs. Grebby.

"Why, Ma, I get them nearly every day at Richmond, there is nothing to be alarmed at in a wire. Philip was going to let me know his train. I thought I told you."

She opens the message, and as she scans it her face falls.

"He is not coming," she says. "Too busy, and won't be able to manage it now. How like Philip! To let you get all ready for him and then fail."

It is more the annoyance of having dressed herself in vain than disappointment at not seeing him which vexes Eleanor.

"I dislike people throwing you over at the last moment; it is very inconsiderate and unkind. But I suppose he can't help it, poor fellow," with a touch of regret for her petulance. "I am very extravagant, Ma. I spend no end on clothes, though you wouldn't think it to look at me now. Philip just trots off to the City and makes the money, so it does not matter a bit."

Mr. Grebby expresses lavish sorrow at Mr. Roche's non-appearance, while Eleanor wanders out down the budding lanes towards the station, just as if Philip were coming after all, only there is neither tumult of sorrow or joy in her heart. She feels just indifferent to everything and everybody. The hedges are sprouting with young green. Surely the world is fair to all eyes but Eleanor's!

Her head is bent, she is gazing on the ground.

Suddenly a shadow crosses her path—the shadow of a man.

She looks up slowly, standing still, rooted to the spot.

A cold chill creeps through her veins, gradually changing to burning fire. She can neither speak nor move, the hedges seem to fly round, the trees spin, the twittering birds shriek!

"*Carol!*"

Eleanor bursts out laughing.

The word breaks from her lips at last like a cry.

Why has Philip failed her, why is he not here to save?

Someone is holding her hand in a passionate clasp, someone presses her cheeks, her lips! Is it a dream or reality, life or death?

The spring bursts suddenly into smiles, Nature laughs loudly, all the world is one wide pleasure field, a place to love, to die in for joy!

"Why did you run away?" he whispers, still holding her in his arms. "Why, did you hide yourself from me, shut out the light from my days? It was cruel, Eleanor. Surely you knew I would have gone to the end of the world to find you, and you thought to evade me here."

"Fate has willed it otherwise. How did you discover me?"

"Giddy Mounteagle gave me your address. I never gave her a moment's peace till she divulged it, poor woman."

A spark of anger flashes in Eleanor's love-laden eyes.

"The traitress!" she mutters under her breath.

"Ah! do not say that. She is happy herself, and I was so miserable, *you* were so miserable."

"How do you know?"

"I have read your heart like a book—it is mine and no other's. I mean to take it—cherish it—keep it—always!"

"You stole it from Philip—you stole it from me!" she cries, her voice shaken by fear and dread. "You see me as I am—weak, defenceless—loving you to my shame—my destruction. I am in your power body and soul—you have got my will as well—it is yours—all yours. Think for a moment, Carol, before you keep these stolen goods—what they cost—*you* and *me*. Pity me in this hopeless moment of surrender—make it less hard to part. Are we to lose everything? Think of your soul—and my soul. I believe that we both have them now in the palms of our hands—to cast into Hell—to lift up to Heaven! You should be the stronger. Remember what it is to be a man!"

"What is your ideal of poor mankind?" he asks hoarsely.

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"To give—not take," replies Eleanor, in the words of Charles Kingsley, which rise suddenly as an inspiration to her tortured mind. "To serve—not rule. To nourish—not devour. To help—not crush. If need, to die—not live!"

"Then I will rise to your standard," he said boldly. "Eleanor, I will kill myself."

"How?" she asks.

"I care not; but to-day—this same hour—you will have driven me to my death!"

"Oh, Carol, you are cruel!" she sighs.

Then the words well into her brain, with fierce, upbraiding, horrible reality: "To-morrow and to-morrow, and to-morrow." She sees the faded touzled hair of the woman in the train, the dusty crape of her bonnet, the red upon her lips.

A cry escapes her, and sinking on the green bank by the roadside, Eleanor buries her face in the grass and sobs in uncontrollable anguish.

Carol cannot bear to watch her misery. He stoops down and gathers the little figure in his arms, straining her to his heart. He kisses dry the liquid eyes, and soothes the low deep sobs.

"I have decided," he says.

"And your choice, our fate, the end?" she asks breathlessly.

"To take," he replies, holding her fast, "not give back that which is mine, now and for ever. To rule (if that is the harsh name you give my love), to devour, to crush, to *live*, Eleanor, not die."

The words sound like a shout of victory on the still air. They kindle a mad delight in the woman's stricken heart.

"We will leave this miserable country, where you are a captive to a man who cannot hold your love, yet calls himself 'husband.' We will go away, no matter where, since we shall be together. We have only our two selves to live for now. The world was created for us alone, we need remember nothing else, an Eden to love in and be happy. Oh! my darling, how bright I will make your life, as it never was before."

"You are right," says Eleanor slowly. "I have never known true happiness. I was very fond of Philip when I married him—the lukewarm affection that grows cold instantly in the chill air of disagreement or mistrust. The love which you have kindled in me is something I did not know or dream of. It is worth all else!"

Carol takes her wedding finger, holds it to his lips a moment, then places an embossed gold ring below the knuckle, with "Kismet" engraved upon it.

Eleanor gazes on the ring wistfully. The words are full of meaning to her just now.

"'Kismet,'" she murmurs. "Only a true Mahommedan should use that expression."

She draws a cat's eye stone, that Philip gave her, from her hand, and offers it to Carol.

This is the last, the supreme act of surrender—that, more than all else, renounces for ever and ever Philip, honour, wifehood, and lays her low in the dust.

"I have never known true happiness."

They walk through the green fields hand in hand; they talk of things to be. The children coming home from school stare at Eleanor, and think how beautiful she is, wondering at the handsome stranger who gazes in her eyes, and whispers so low they cannot catch the words.

Yes, she looks just the same, as the evening tints fall with a rosy glow on her rich hair and simple sun-bonnet. How innocent she appears in the plain, homely attire, and that strange but glorious smile parting her lips. There are daisies under her feet, and blue sky over her head; love is in her heart, but hell is in her eyes.

Her eyes droop. The children cannot see—Hell!

(To be continued.)

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"DELIGHTFUL" TREATMENT FOR CURING CORPULENCE.

The process of curing any physical disorder is so generally the converse of "delightful" that the use of this and similar terms in reference to Mr. F. C. Russell's now popular treatment for corpulency naturally attracts special attention. These terms are to be found in a large number of the letters included in the just issued 18th edition of Mr. Russell's little volume of 256 pages. "Corpulency, and the Cure" (Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.). These communications are from persons of both sexes, and it is apparent that their number is represented by thousands annually, who have found in this system of treatment a safe, rapid, and permanent cure for excessive fatness. This testimony forms in the aggregate, indeed, a wonderful record of the rapid reduction of excessive adipose tissue, and those who have personal reasons for being interested in the subject should send to the above address six penny stamps for a copy (post free) of Mr. Russell's notably suggestive little book. "I think the treatment most delightful," writes one out of a large number of equally enthusiastic correspondents. And the expressions "Admirable tonic," "Splendid stuff," "A delicious beverage, mixed with mineral waters," are of constant recurrence in this singularly interesting correspondence. The details given by many of the writers of these letters as to the results of the treatment fully justify the use of such eulogistic phrases. It must certainly be delightful to experience the sensation of losing unnecessary and dangerous fat by pounds per week, and frequently stones per month, and that by the aid of treatment which simultaneously increases the appetite and renders its reasonable indulgence innocuous. The experience, too, must be rendered still more delightful by the knowledge, which may be gained from a perusal of Mr. Russell's book, that his preparation is a pure vegetable product, without any admixture of the mineral poisons which are too frequently administered. With a candour which also is delightful, Mr. Russell prints in his book the recipe for the preparation.

A POSITIVE REMEDY FOR CORPULENCE

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled, "Corpulency, and the Cure" (256 pages), and is a cheap issue (only 6d), published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Our space will not do justice to this book; send for it yourself. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes: "Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid: 'My son, Count ——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos—*i.e.*, 34lb.' Another writes: 'So far (six weeks from the commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes: 'I am just half the size.' A fourth: 'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8lb. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes: 'A reduction of 18lb. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes: 'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again, a lady says: 'It reduced me considerably, not only in the body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says: 'Step on a weighing-machine on Monday morning and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee that you have lost 2lb. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations.'"—*Cork Herald.*

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No. 377. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 21ST, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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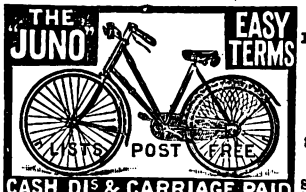

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No. 12

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GAY AND GRAVE

Short Stories

Edited by C. Arthur Pearson.

No. 377.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending March 21st, 1896.

THE FLAG OF PIERRE.

On the north-eastern shore of the Lake Champlain is a long, sandy beach. Inland from this stretches the dreary expanse of a tamarack swamp. One afternoon early in October, the only living things plainly in sight along this beach were several small sandpipers that daintily tiptoed over the sand, and the tall blue heron wading in shallow water. But when one looked closely, as did Plover Pierre, one noticed a bunch of bushes stuck into the sand so as to form what hunters term a "blind."

As Plover Pierre scanned the beach he discovered a man lying behind the bushes of the blind. This man was a stalwart, bronzed fellow, perhaps thirty years old; he had on the blue uniform of the United States army, and wore long leather boots, and as he lay stretched on his side a fowling-piece rested on his arm. Just now the lieutenant was yawning. The scene was a stupidly peaceful one, all things were quiet and sleepy—too much so to please the young officer. He longed for a flock of plover to flutter by and relieve the monotony.

"If something doesn't turn up pretty soon," he thought, "I'll stalk my friend, the blue heron—though I believe the old fellow keeps an eye on me, for all his marching along in such an unconscious and dignified manner. He's the only bird bigger than my thumb that I've seen for an hour. Why, so far as sport goes, I might better be at the barracks drilling recruits. But hello! there's a queer bird."

He had seen Plover Pierre. Pierre emerged from the shadow of the evergreens and stood upon the sand. The boy did not see many strangers, so he moved along the beach to investigate this one. As he passed by the little sandpipers tipuped as if making low courtesies to a friend, and the blue heron looked at him with less haughtiness than it usually assumed. Perhaps the bird believed that Pierre came to destroy the absurd structure called a blind.

But for once the heron was mistaken. Pierre did not disturb the blind, but crawled behind it to chat with the soldier. At first the boy was half afraid of this long fellow in blue clothes and brass buttons, though his face was kind and friendly. Pierre had once been in a law court at Quebec, where the high official was addressed as monseigneur. The boy decided to use this title in the present instance.

"Monseigneur, are you a Yankee?"

The soldier nodded, and Pierre resumed:

"So am I. We have moved, and now we live one mile south of the line between Canada and Vermont. You see, I am a Yankee by a whole mile."

The soldier laughed, got up, and made room for Pierre.

"Come, what'll you have? Here's some ale, and here's a cigar."

Plover Pierre shook his head. "Jules says liquor is only good to put out a cigar. I want neither."

"Why, this Jules must be a perfect stoic."

"Oh, no; Jules is my friend, and he lives quite near us. He, too, had moved to Vermont."

"And I imagine you're great playfellows," suggested the lieutenant.

"Well, not quite that, monseigneur. He teaches me and knows many stories. You see he is old. He was my father's clerk, and he has white hair standing up all over his head. My father," said Pierre proudly, "was a notary, and knew all things. Jules says my father was quite old when he married the mother. Then he died, and she married Jean Bourdo. He is strong and can work on the farm, but he likes better to be idle." The

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boy was rattling on, when he remembered that Jules said people should not talk too much of their own affairs. A dusky red crept into his swarthy face. "But it tires you to hear all this. Do you come from the barracks across the lake, where they teach new soldiers?"

His new acquaintance smiled assent.

"Jules says it is a shame for United States people to fight each other, but I like wars. I should go if it were not for that."

As Pierre said "that," he looked at something which should have matched the sturdy leg curled beneath him, but it was only a piece of wood fastened to a very short stump of leg. Besides the wooden leg, Pierre carried two yellow crutches. Perhaps it was these slender substitutes for legs which gave him the name of Plover Pierre. The soldier's eye searched the bosom of the lake as though much interested in watching a distant flock of plover.

Pierre's face brightened as he continued: "Although I can't walk well, I ride better than most boys. I might be a horse soldier, and so fight just as hard for my country as can other people. Will you drill me to be a soldier?"

The man in blue shifted his eyes from the imaginary flock of plover and looked at Pierre. "Why, you're too young. You can't be more than ten years old."

"I am twelve, and know well how to shoot."

The officer seemed to be pondering Pierre's soldierly advantages. He muttered to himself: "I wish those fellows I'm drilling had this boy's spirit."

But now the quiet bay was stirred into new life. A steam launch rounded one of the points and puffed towards the young officer's blind. The blue heron gave a cry of surprise, and then, recovering its dignity, swept away with graceful curves of its majestic wings.

The soldier got up and shook the sand from his clothes.

"Here's the government boat come to take me back to Plattsburg barracks."

A small skiff put out from the launch to bring him on board. He threw a few shore birds into the skiff, stepped in himself, and was rowed away.

The government boat flew two flags—a large one at the bow and a smaller one at the stern. When the lieutenant got on board he pulled down the one from the stern, and getting into the skiff again was rowed back to the shore. Pierre was still standing on the sand.

The officer gravely handed the colours to the boy. "Uncle Sam presents these to a valued citizen. Never forget that you are a Yankee"

Pierre, being such a new citizen, did not quite understand the reference to Uncle Sam. But his heart gave a throb of pride, and he reverently took the coloured silk into his grimy hands.

As he hopped back through the swamp road leading to the fields beyond, he thought: "Now I am really a Yankee. The tall man would not give me the flag if he had any doubts about it."

When he reached the log house it was growing dusk. The fat Twins, his half sisters, were rolling over the floor, and Mme. Bourdo busied herself in getting supper. The stout Canadian woman still showed some traces of her comely girlhood. Jean Bourdo's heavy figure lounged by the stove, a greivous obstacle both to his wife and the tumbling twins.

"Jean Bourdo," said Pierre, "would you not like to be a soldier?"

"A good question! And if I went to war, who would earn bread for you to eat?"

"Jules says that if any of my father's money had been well managed it would support all."

Jean turned angrily. "Jules is crazy! And as for your father, Pierre Beaudrie, he did so much burrowing into old books that he had no time to plough the land or collect the fees from the clients."

The woman stopped him. "The notary made a good husband, though he was old enough to be my father. In his time I lived like a lady."

Pierre had hidden the flag under his jacket, and now he climbed the ladder to the loft and put the silk beneath his pillow. He returned to the lower room, the family had supper, and Jean, lighting his pipe, said:

"Pierre, go to bed. I have company to-night, and to-morrow you must be up early to help the thrashers."

Plover Pierre kept nearly as early hours as the plovers themselves. To-night, moreover, he was willing to be alone, for he had plenty to think about. He pulled himself up the ladder as nimbly as could most boys who had two legs. After admiring the bright flag, he carefully laid it away among his few belongings and soon was in bed.

Visions of war and soldiers filled his excited brain. The friendly officer ceased to be an awe-inspiring monseigneur; now he was merely a good comrade, and they were fighting for the same beloved country. Pierre himself, bestride a gallant white charger and holding aloft the emblematic flag, led ranks of horsemen to victory.

The restless boy, tossed by such fancies, must have lain awake for a long time, when he was recalled to himself by hearing a door open and some one enter the room below. Again and again visitors arrived, until there must have been ten men assembled in the lonely cabin.

So many visitors were unusual, and Pierre, at first without meaning to turn eavesdropper, heard enough of their talk to rouse his suspicions. Getting quietly out of bed he put his ear to a crack in the floor and listened.

The men had arranged their business and were about to leave. When they had all risen, one of them spoke to Jean Bourdo:

"Remember, Bourdo, how it is settled. We have to meet here to-morrow afternoon at five—twenty men, armed and on good horses. You, in what disguise you please, are to ride with us, guide us to St. Albans by the shortest road and point out the village banks. We will do the rest. For doing this you are to receive £20. If there seems danger of your being implicated, you can cross the line into Canada, and we will make good all your losses."

Bourdo was satisfied and the men went out.

Plover Pierre, listening overhead, trembled with excitement. He felt sure this was a plot against his new Yankee land—a plot which might compel him to return to Canada. He comprehended that there was trouble ahead for St. Albans, and that the people must be warned. Indeed, he had heard the conspiring of those desperate and irresponsible men, who in 1864, under no authority from Richmond or any government, planned to sweep down from Canada, surprise the village of St. Albans, and robs its banks.

The boy crept noiselessly back to bed, but it was long before he slept. When he did, the flag, the officer, the conspirators and the fated banks pushed their benign and hateful influences into his dreams.

All the next morning Pierre was busy helping the thrashers. Jean would have kept him at work during the

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afternoon as well, but at four o'clock the boy contrived to escape from the barn. Slipping away to the house, he got his flag from the loft where he had left it.

He tried to think of some way of warning St. Albans before the men, who were to leave at five o'clock, could reach there. Lame as he was, it was impossible to walk the fifteen miles in time. Bourdo, he knew, would take the young brown mare, their only horse. Even now he was grooming her in the stable. Pierre was almost in despair, when he remembered that old Jules, their neighbour, had a horse. To be sure it was old and somewhat stiff, but it was better than nothing. He would at once go to Jules and ask for the horse. But moments were precious and there was no time for explanations. He knew where the animal was pastured and must take it without asking. Soon he had caught the old grey, slipped a bridle over its head, and, scorning a saddle, was bestride his steed.

Plover Pierre did not know the country well, but he was sure of the general direction in which St. Albans lay. As he galloped along, Pierre grew excited and was filled with joyous enthusiasm. The small figure of the gaunt grey horse was perhaps a travesty on his vision of the cavalry officer dashing at the head of his troops, but the boy was satisfied. His mission was a responsible one, and he was working for the cause in which he burned to distinguish himself.

He had pushed the flag under his jacket. Now he took it out, and tied it about him like an officer's sash. The people at the few farmhouses along the road stared at this apparition. After he had travelled what seemed to him a long distance, he got into a country where there were no farmhouses. The land was hilly, rough, and used for pasturage alone.

Pierre had no watch, but he thought it must be nearly six o'clock. This could not be the main road to St. Albans. He climbed high hills and looked about, but he could see no village spires. While watching from one of these hills he saw far to the westward a body of horsemen cantering alone on a smooth road.

Pierre's heart sank within him. These were the raiders, and he was too late. His opportunity had come, and he had failed! Discouraged and limp in body, he rode sadly down to the highway where he had seen the horsemen, and followed it back towards his home.

As the raiders dashed through the outskirts of St. Albans the people stared in astonishment at the cavalcade of wild-looking men carrying carbines, and with pistols stuck in their belts. Jean Bourdo dressed as an Indian chief, all his dull wits sharpened by excitement, led them on.

They rode into the midst of the town. The villagers, unconscious of danger, did not molest them. Bourdo pointed out the different banks; these had closed for the day to the public, but the book-keepers were still at their desks. The raiders overpowered them, broke open the safes, and took what money they could hastily gather.

In half-an-hour they were galloping away, firing their pistols as they went. One citizen who appeared at his doorstep was shot and killed. But most of the bullets were fired high in the air. They soon passed the last house, and rapidly moved northward over the same road which Pierre had taken on his return home.

Jules' old horse was growing more and more lame. It was unshod, and this long journey had made its feet tender. Pierre did not like to urge it too much, and so had to be satisfied with a slow trot. The night would now have been quite dark had not a crescent moon shed an uncertain light on the brown fields, and lingered about the bright silk which hung from the shoulder of a small boy perched on a tall, grey horse.

Dark patches of woodland bordered the road, and when Pierre was passing one of these, which he thought not far from home, he heard a clattering of hoofs behind him. He did not expect the raiders to return so soon, but he thought it must be them. The boy feared to let Bourdo see him.

A wood road led into the bushes, and Pierre, riding into this dark recess, halted some twenty yards from the road to let the horsemen pass. His horse was hidden by shadows; but the little moon slid down between the evergreens and lit up the gay colours of the flag.

The raiders were riding recklessly, singing and shouting. They were hilarious with success. Two young fellows brought up the rear of the galloping column. A startled owl flapped over their heads, and one aimed his carbine at the slowly moving bird.

"Jim, if we'd no orders not to fire I'd bring down that fellow."

"If I wanted to shoot," returned Jim. "I'd take orders from no man. Hello! look into this path. Don't that look like the thing they call a flag up here?" He stopped his horse, raised a rifle and fired.

The two resumed their gallop and caught up with the main body. The captain looked back angrily, but did not stop to remonstrate. Already the sharp ear of Jean Bourdo had caught the sound of pursuing horses. They were only two miles from Canada line, when a troop of horsemen appeared on the brow of a hill a short distance behind them.

The robbers put spurs to their horses; the better animals responded, but some could not, and their riders were overtaken, made prisoners and part of the money recovered. The better mounted men escaped into Canada. They, too, were finally captured and most of the booty returned to the banks.

Jean Bourdo left the raiders before they were overtaken, and no one suspected his connection with the "St. Albans raid."

The next morning Jules was surprised to find his grey horse, more lame than usual, waiting at the stable door. The old clerk went to the Bourdo house to ask Pierre if he knew anything about it. The boy was missing. Jules thought his absence and the travelworn condition of the horse were in some way connected. He returned to his stable, and with patient care followed back the track of shoeless hoofs.

Slowly he traced the horse's path till he was led to the swamp beside the road. Here he found flag and boy, equally cold, and both pierced with rifle bullet.

In the evening a friend strolled into the lieutenant's quarters at the recruiting station. "Here's news," he announced. "Roughs from Canada have robbed the St. Albans banks. One villager was killed, and this morning a boy cripple, wrapped in a flag and shot through the heart, was found near the road by which the raiders returned to Canada."

"A crippled boy with a flag!" cried the officer. He threw away his cigar, and the next day he was moody and took little interest in the drilling.

The evergreen bushes stuck into the sand of the bay near the tamarack swamp dried and wilted, the plover uttered mournful cries, as they circled over the deserted beach, and the blue heron, wading along with drooping wings, found the old time relish for frogs was gone.

Plover Pierre had left them.

FRANCIS S. PALMER.

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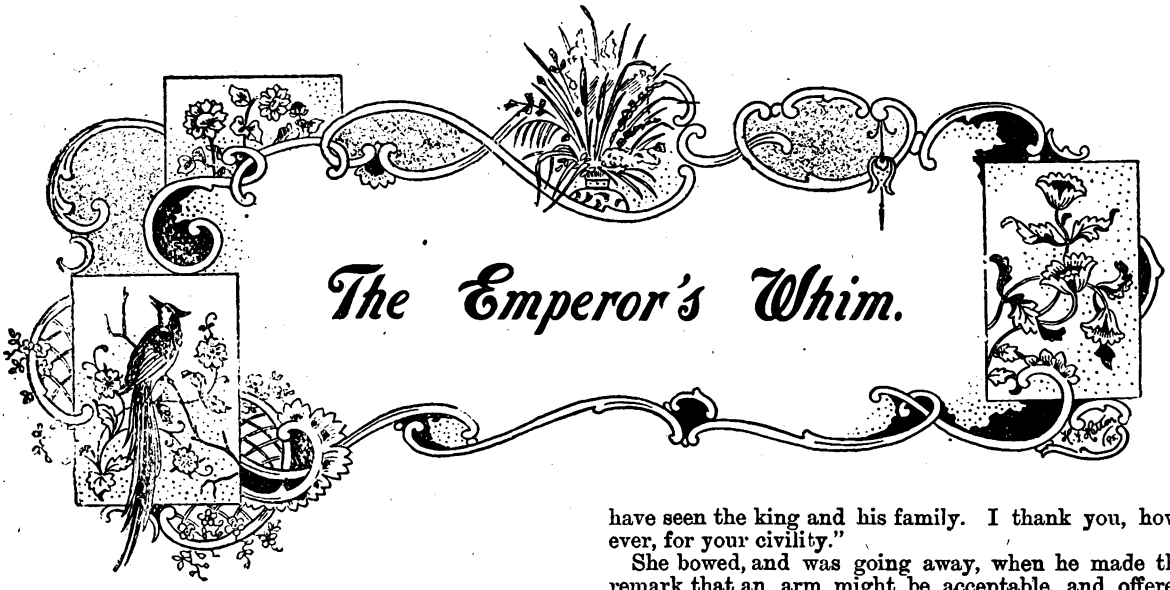

The Emperor's Whim.

CHAPTER I.

The Stolen Handkerchief.

Frederick William, first King of Prussia, had come from Potsdam to Magdeburg to inspect the ramparts of that town. Everywhere the windows were filled with curious spectators.

"Did you notice how hard the king looked at you, Krabb?" said a prominent citizen, named Wilmson.

"You mistake," replied Krabb; "His Majesty's eyes fell on yourself."

The old soldier was disputing the point, when he discovered that Wilmson, carried away by the crowd, had suddenly left him. He half-turned to the right, when a handsome young man touched his arm. It was the son of Mr. Wilmson, who seemed also looking out for someone he had lost in the crowd.

"Is it you, Mr. Fritz. Have you seen the king? You should have come with us."

"One word," said young Wilmson; "have you met a young lady dressed in black—a slight figure, of moderate height?"

"No," said Krabb.

Fritz started in pursuit of the lost fair one, the acquaintance with whom had been made after the following fashion. Curiosity led him into the midst of the crowd. Thinking that he might meet some one of his acquaintances there, he looked around; his eyes fell upon a young girl, covered with a long black veil, which, however, did not conceal two large, soft, brown eyes and an alabaster skin. Being before her, he very politely offered to exchange places. This offer was accepted. Fritz was enchanted to render this small service to so fair a creature. In spite of the long veil, he could see the massive braids of fair hair, and his eye rested admiringly on the beautiful outline of her figure.

"Did you see him well?" asked the girl, smiling with graceful frankness.

Fritz Wilmson trembled, and turned red as a corn poppy. "Did you see him well yourself?" he faltered out.

"Oh!" was the answer, "this is not the first time I have seen the king and his family. I thank you, however, for your civility."

She bowed, and was going away, when he made the remark that an arm might be acceptable, and offered her his. Too simple to see any danger, the young girl accepted it. They walked together thus through the crowd without speaking.

"But I live very far from here," she said at last; "I should be sorry to trouble you."

"I am too happy to accompany you, fräulein; but," he added confusedly, "I am at your orders, and if you wish I will leave you."

Suddenly she cried out, looking uneasily round.

"What has happened?" Fritz eagerly inquired.

"Someone in the crowd has snatched from me a handkerchief; it was embroidered by my mother."

"Walk on slowly, fräulein, I will overtake the thief." He left her. At the exclamation of the young girl, he noticed a man darting through an open space in the crowd. Wilmson hastened after him. The thief, in his turn, saw Wilmson, and took to his heels. As Fritz was gaining ground, he turned short and confronted the enemy.

"What do you want? Why do you follow me?" he asked, with the pocket-handkerchief still in his hand, which his rapid flight had prevented him from stowing away. Fritz, eager to carry his prize to the beautiful unknown, sprang at the handkerchief, and snatched it away.

In one of the corners of the handkerchief a purse was tied up, which explained the reason of the attempt. Wilmson hastened back to the principal street, already clear of the crowd. But, alas! the fair girl was nowhere to be seen.

CHAPTER II.

The Interview with the King.

On his return home, tired and discomfited, Fritz began to examine the handkerchief, in hope of discovering some mark which might give a clue to its owner. In one of the corners were the letters "C. de. St——" embroidered in blue silk.

It was the custom of Mr. Wilmson to pass the fine summer evenings in the garden, where, amid shady trees and flowers, a tasteful pavilion had been erected. It

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was there that Mr. Wilmson, M. de Moss, his sister. and Fritz were collected after dinner.

Suddenly, in the midst of their conversation, a servant opened the garden gate, and ushered in an officer. At this apparition everyone took a respectful attitude. Mr. Wilmson, the father, uncovered his head, and advanced towards the stranger, who bowed.

"The commandant of the town desires to speak to the elder Mr. Wilmson and his son. He orders you to be at his house by nine."

"I shall not fail. May I ask you the reason, sir?"

"I do not know; he has told me nothing. Good-night. To-morrow at nine."

When Mr. Wilmson and his son went to pay their visit to the commandant, they were ushered into a large room, magnificently furnished. Two grenadiers stood at the door on guard—officers of different regiments were grouped here and there. Some moments after, an officer entered, and asked if Mr. Wilmson and his son were there.

"Follow me," he said, introducing them into a small cabinet. "You, sir, the elder, enter first! the young man will wait."

Fritz had forgotten for a moment his fair unknown, but he saw several ladies now crossing the street in a post-chaise; one of them raised her eyes—it was the beautiful young girl in black. Fritz rushed to the window; she bent forward, and appeared to look at him attentively till she was out of sight.

"Heavens!" cried Fritz, "it is she! Is it necessary that I should be here?" And, turning towards the footman at hand, he asked if he knew who the young lady was.

"Certainly, Fräulein de St——"

He was about to question further, when his father re-entered the room.

"I cannot stay longer," he said, in a low voice; "return as soon as possible."

The door re-opened, and an orderly signed to Fritz to enter. The cabinet was filled with generals, all standing, with heads uncovered. One man alone remained seated by a table with his hat on. Young Wilmson recognised the king, and bowed. Frederick looked at him for a moment in silence, with a marked expression of kindness; then he turned to those nearest, and said:

"Not more than twenty—four years before him!" Then, addressing Fritz, he said: "Young man, what would you wish to be?"

"My father intends me to succeed him in commerce, but my inclination is for literature—to study."

"Pooh! pooh! You shall enter my guard at Potsdam—do you understand? If you conduct yourself well, I shall keep you only six weeks in the ranks; some men of education are wanted in my guard. Have you a wife?"

"Your Majesty——" stammered Fritz.

"Ah! you are silent. Beware of choosing a wife without my permission; leave it to me. Have you a taste for a soldier's profession?"

"No, sire; I wish to remain free."

"You know my will—I want not free men, but obedience—prepare for your journey to Potsdam."

"I shall defend my rights against violence; I will die rather than take the oath of service."

"What!" exclaimed the king, seizing his cane and threatening Wilmson. "You dare resist a king!" Then, turning towards the commandant, he exclaimed:

"Take that fellow to the barracks, and let him be watched. He shall go to-morrow with the transport. If he makes the least resistance, put him in chains. Go."

The king pointed towards the door. The commandant seized Wilmson's arm, and dragged him out.

CHAPTER III.

The Project Abandoned.

With a heavy heart young Wilmson walked through the streets of Magdeburg, between two guards.

Next morning, at daybreak, the recruits defiled on the bridge of the Elbe. Fritz, not to attract attention, had changed his elegant dress of the day before for a travelling suit. Near the end of the bridge, some one called him:

"My good Fritz, who could have expected this thunderbolt, all from your being so fine and tall a man? Alas! our good king's mania for giants!"

It was old Krabb. He had come to bid farewell to young Wilmson, and to accompany him part of the way. Fritz embraced the aged soldier; but sorrow prevented words—tears were in his eyes. The old man, unwilling to show his own emotion, growled out huskily:

"Thunder and lightning! I did not expect you would show yourself such an old woman. Come, sir, be a soldier"—and Krabb himself here lost voice, and left him.

The recruits were but a few days on the road. Arrived at Potsdam, they were passed in review, and drafted into various regiments. Wilmson entered the foot-guards, and, without loss of time, was drilled and taught the use of his weapons. He entered zealously into his duties, and soon became proficient. This good-will gained him the captain's favour, together with his good looks and unmistakable gentlemanly bearing. His education and wealth enabled him in various ways to be useful to his captain and fellow-soldiers. His story spread abroad—it was no solitary instance—but none attracted such universal sympathy and interest. The colonel also conceived a great affection for him, and showed him signal favour; further, in three months' time, at the king's desire, they promoted him, and he became a sergeant. Meanwhile, Wilmson's deliverance seemed nigh. His father had arranged for his flight to Holland.

Everything was carefully planned. Krabb was to conduct Fritz from his lodgings to a neighbouring inn, where the disguises were to be in readiness. The same evening he hastened all joyful to Fritz's lodgings, and found him seated before a table, his head buried in his hands, dejected, and in a very taciturn mood.

The old man was astonished, and inquired the cause of the dejection.

"Krabb, my friend," said young Wilmson, "let me be; I am in an unfortunate position—I cannot go. I am bound here, and cannot break the chain. If I could I would not. Were the king himself to order my release I should still remain. Good-bye, my old friend. One day, perhaps, you will know all."

Krabb felt compelled to leave—Fritz was too firm for remonstrance.

Wilmson had his reasons for this sudden change. The night before he had kept midnight watch at the castle; afterwards the fancy seized him to take a walk. At the early hours of dawn he noticed a young woman dressed in black. The conviction flashed upon him that it was the beautiful unknown. On drawing nearer

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it was verified. He accosted her respectfully, and exclaimed:

"Can it be yourself, fräulein? Permit me to ask to what fortunate circumstances I owe the happiness of seeing you?"

"Sir, before answering your question, I must discharge my debt of thanks for the service you rendered me at Magdeburg."

"I greatly regretted my inability to restore the handkerchief of which I fortunately regained possession, but my researches were fruitless. I have it by me, together with the purse, which I shall be happy to leave at the address you may indicate. Might I further hope to learn from you whether you reside at Potsdam, or if this be but a casual visit?"

"My name is Clementine Sterne. Misfortunes have obliged me to accept a situation as companion in a nobleman's family in this town, where I have been residing within the last few days. But your own position seems equally changed—that uniform——"

"Alas! yes, fräulein, the king has made me a soldier, against my will."

Just then a general crossed the square on horseback; the soldiers turned out, and Fritz hastily left, to head the line. When the general had passed, Clementine, too, was gone.

It was this meeting that had caused Fritz's change of plan.

CHAPTER IV.

A Monarch's Whim.

One day the king was riding on horseback, with his generals, when he met on the road a very tall lady, who struck him by her height. He asked:

"Who is that giantess?"

"I remember to have seen," said one of his generals, "this beauty at Potsdam. She is governess in the family of a minister, whose name I forget. Of all the beauties of Potsdam she is head of the file."

"*Parbleu!*" exclaimed the king; "if she marries a man of her own size there will be the stock of a famous race."

Meanwhile the young lady came nearer. Her beauty was no less remarkable than her height. The king stopped his horse. She looked up and recognised the king.

"Young lady," said Frederick, "are you going to the town?"

Rather confused, she answered: "Yes."

"Do me the kindness to take a letter to the commandant."

The king asked for paper, and wrote a few lines whilst on horseback.

"You will give this note to the commandant. But tell me—are you married?"

She shook her head.

"Then you have a lover?"

The lady blushed.

"I understand—go. It is important this note be received immediately, and mark—ask for the commandant himself."

She bowed. Frederick galloped off, and the generals laughed at each other, guessing the contents of the letter. About half-an-hour after, an orderly went to Sergeant Wilmson with an order to present himself directly before the commandant. He was shown into a large room, where he found, besides the commandant, the colonel of the regiment and the captain of the battalion. All three wore a smile on their lips. This smile was a contrast to a woman's tears and sobs heard from a room adjoining.

"Wilmson," said the colonel, "I have agreeable news for you. It will make your comrades jealous. The king has found you a wife; nowhere, either at Potsdam, or at Berlin, could you find a lovelier."

"I will not marry her!" answered Wilmson.

"The king's order is plain. The girl is in the next room crying; it seems she has a lover. The chaplain is here; come, you must marry. Here is His Majesty's order, to the effect that Sergeant Wilmson be herewith, and without delay, united to the bearer of the order, in presence of the colonel; no attention to be paid to the objections of either party."

"Gentlemen, for the love of God, do not force me. You will cause the lifelong misery of two persons. Beware! for I am desperate. In spite of you and your king, I will be free!"

The commandant looked glum, went towards the door, and made a sign. Two under-officers of the guard entered—he whispered something, and they placed themselves on each side of the door. From the adjoining room were heard sobs.

"Confound it!" said the commandant, "this must end—chaplain, prepare."

He moved towards the adjoining room, and opened the door. A woman shrieked and cast herself at his feet. The colonel looked away. Wilmson saw and heard nothing.

"Come, my dear boy," the colonel said kindly, "resign yourself."

For the first time Wilmson noticed the chaplain, and, at his side, his destined bride, supported by two women. The two victims involuntarily glanced towards each other. Clementine—could Wilmson believe his eyes? Clementine herself, for one moment remained petrified; the next, a deep flush overspread her face, and then she fell down in a swoon.

"You have killed that poor girl," exclaimed Wilmson, "and now kill me."

Emotion overpowering him, he sank into a chair. No sooner did he open his eyes than the commandant called out:

"He will soon come to himself. Chaplain, unite them before Wilmson's senses quite return."

The chaplain obeyed. Paralysed, his eyes fixed on the still fainting Clementine, Wilmson no longer opposed the ceremony. The "yes" of either party was dispensed with, and the ring was passed for them. The commandant ordered a carriage to convey away the couple. The colonel drew Wilmson to him, who, still stunned, knew not what passed.

"Collect yourself, my son," he said; "the misfortune is great, but you were powerless to avoid it. This poor girl is now your wife; her position excites pity. Behave gently to her; her life hangs on a thread; a harsh word might kill her. Control yourself; promise me not to give way to despair."

Wilmson held out his hand to the good man, though he understood not a word.

The carriage drew up. At the commandant's order Clementine was conducted, or rather carried, to the carriage. Wilmson stepped in after her, and the coachman drove off.

"Is it, then, true?" he said at length, pressing Clementine's hand to his heart, and looking at her with fond delight. "Dear Clementine, if I dream, do not awaken me; if this be an illusion, oh! do not dispel it."

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Clementine gently withdrew her hand. The carriage stopped. Wilmson handed his wife out, and led her into his home. After ascending a few steps, she stopped.

"Mr. Wilmson, where am I?"

"In my house, dear Clementine. They have married us without our consent. I am yours; but I do not know how the king has guessed my dearest, my most secret wish. I have been entirely null in this affair, but our fate is irrevocably fixed."

Clementine hesitated; she ascended, nevertheless, but very slowly, and Wilmson opened the door of his room. She advanced timidly, standing in the middle of a large room elegantly furnished. Books, papers, flowers, music, were scattered on the tables and chairs.

"Ah, Clementine," said Wilmson, "when I left this room a quarter of an hour since, I did not expect to receive in it such a guest."

"Did you, indeed, know nothing of what was going to happen?" inquired Clementine. "Did you never mention to the colonel, or even to the king——"

"I have no part, I assure you, in this affair; I have never breathed your name."

"Then you are as unfortunate as myself: for Fräulein B—— was the bride destined for you. She little knew the contents of the letter she gave me."

Then he related to her the strange story of the last few months. Clementine listened astonished. She told him how she had come there, at the request of this tall lady whom she had not long made the acquaintance of. Whether pressed for time, or for reasons of her own, she would not go to the commandant's house, and she begged Clementine to deliver the letter in her stead. The commandant told her that it was an order to unite her immediately to a man in the guards. Clementine affirmed there was some mistake; the letter had been given to her by a lady. They only laughed. The colonel and the chaplain were summoned, and she had fainted in her distress.

This gave the key to the enigma.

"Then it was not you," he said, "who were intended? You are my wife against the king's will! Never king was so well served."

Clementine made a step towards the door.

"Would you leave me—would you undo what Providence has so miraculously brought about?" said Fritz. "Potsdam already knows this strange adventure, and that you are my wife. Ah, Clementine, where will you go? Am I, then, so distasteful? Do I inspire no faith?"

She looked shyly at him, then held out her hand.

"I have faith in you," she said, "but not in our happiness. Oh, if you knew—you were my only friend on earth. I have always——" The words died on her lips.

Wilmson, in ecstasy, clasped her to his heart, exclaiming—"Mine for ever!" She murmured a very low assent. Suddenly a terrible thought struck her.

"The king's will," she said, "may as suddenly end our happiness."

"Do not fear, Clementine; the king is good; he will not separate us. If so, however, we can make our escape. Any hour my old friend Krabb will come and help our flight."

While they were talking, some one knocked at the door. It was a messenger with an order from the king. Wilmson was commanded to present himself at the castle with his bride. They both felt alarmed, but no time was allowed them for reflection.

Clementine trembled violently. Wilmson whispered courage, but his voice was ill-assured. Arrived at the castle, an ominous silence met them; at intervals broken, however, by the terrible tones of a voice in a distant apartment. The voice was Frederick's. Among the officers assembled in the waiting-room was the colonel. He went up immediately to Wilmson.

"Well, my son, your lot is fixed. The king is furious with the commandant. He had destined for you another bride, a tall and beautiful girl he met that very morning during his ride. A mistake has been made; the king pities you and wants to see you."

When the newly-married pair were ushered in, Frederick fixed a searching glance on Clementine. She looked ready to sink. Wilmson's anxiety was apparent.

"Did you not declare to the commandant," said the king, harshly addressing her, "that you had received that letter from another lady?"

"Sire, I repeated it a hundred times," faltered Clementine, collecting her remaining strength; "but no one listened."

The king paced up and down the apartment, then abruptly stopped short before Wilmson.

"I am very sorry, my poor fellow," he said kindly. "What shall I do for you now? My intention in giving you a wife was not to render you miserable. Listen. I wish you well; ask a favour, and it is granted. But I cannot break the tie which binds you—it would be contrary to the Divine law. What would you have?"

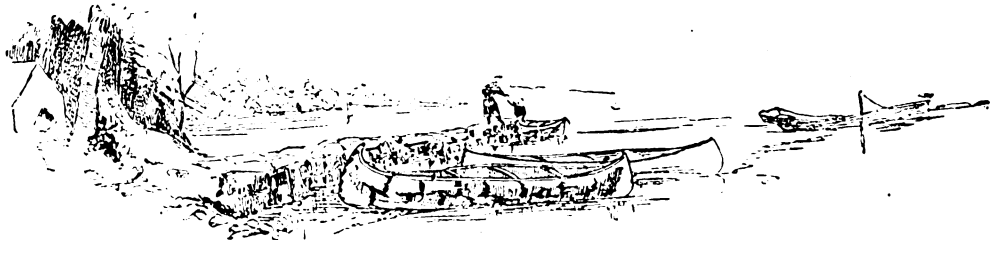
Wilmson did not hesitate.

"Sire, my freedom—my discharge!"

The king, who was unprepared for this, made a gesture of displeasure; but after a moment's silence, he said to Wilmson:

"A king cannot retract—you are free!"

GREGORY GALTON.



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A Child of To-day.

My little neighbour, Bettina, came in one evening and said imperiously: "Tell me a story."

"Certainly," I said; "sit down and I will begin. 'Once upon a time, a long, long time ago——'"

"I don't like 'a long, long time ago,' that's the way grandma's stories always begin, and you're not as old as grandma, and can't know anything about 'a long, long time ago.' Tell me something else."

"Very well," I said submissively, "I know a very pretty story about a little girl who was one day out in the fields gathering flowers, and as she was sauntering along——"

"She met a little old woman, who said to her, 'little girl'—I know all that, the little girl and the little old woman always say the same things, and the little old woman always turns out to be a fairy and the little girl always marries the prince. I don't want to marry a prince; my papa says there isn't a prince living his papa couldn't buy up three times over——"

"Bettina," I gasped.

"And as for fairies I've been in the fields often, and I've never met any fairies, big or little."

"And what's more, Bettina," I said, shaking my head at her sadly, "you never will."

"No, and I don't want to; they always say such foolish things, like the stupid old giants. I'm sick of giants! I saw one once in a show, and he didn't eat up anybody or say 'fee, fo, fi, fum' down in his shoes like the books say: he just stood up there and let people look at him like a piece of wood. He wasn't worth paying sixpence to see. Tell me a story, please."

"But it is so hard to tell you a story; there are so many things you don't like. Let me see—shall I tell you about the man in the moon?"

"There isn't any man in the moon; there's nothing but dried up lakes and rocks there, and all sorts of dead things."

"Oh?"

"And I don't want to hear about Father Christmas, because I know who Father Christmas is, and anyhow he couldn't get down the chimney through the grate, because the grate's too little."

"Well, then, there is the rabbit that comes on Easter——"

Bettina's lip curled scornfully. "Why I get the dye for the eggs myself?"

"Red Ridinghood——"

"Pooh? Who ever heard a wolf talk? Did you?"

"No," I said feebly; "but they sometimes bite."

"Course they do."

"Then," I said desperately, "suppose you tell me a story."

This idea seemed to please her. She leant back complacently in her chair and folded her hands in her lap. Her hair fell on her shoulders like yellow silk, her skin was pink, her eyes blue, and her little form clad in costly clothes, made in the picturesquely simple fashion of long ago. An ideal looking child, aureoled by the setting sun.

"Well," she began, in a quick, monotonous tone, pitching her voice a key higher than usual, "there's a man lives next door to us named Smith—you've seen him?"

"He has a wife and she's named Smith."

"You've seen her?"

"Yes."

"And they've got five children—Anna Smith, Fanny Smith, Tommy Smith, Georgie Smith. You've seen them?"

"Yes."

"And a baby—you've seen it?"

"Yes."

"But the baby hasn't been christened yet; and when it cries it goes 'wha-an, wha-an, wha-an,' and it's got blue eyes and no hair, and they've got a dog—you've seen it?"

"No."

"Named Bruno, and every time the baby goes out the dog goes with it, and they always know when the baby's coming home, because the dog comes in first; and they've got a cow, and a cat that's too old to catch rats, and mamma says she doesn't know why they keep it because it costs something to feed it, but the children are very fond of it; and they've got a cook and a girl, but they haven't got a nurse, and they haven't got a carriage 'cause they're too poor to keep one, and mamma says they're not the kind of people she wants to lend ours to.

"I don't know why—'cause their shoes are clean and their clothes are nice, though they don't cost as much as mine—and they've got nice hats—Anna's hat's got pink flowers on it, and Fanny's hat's got blue flowers, and Georgie's hat's got red flowers, and the baby's got a lace cap all full of frills, and every one of them, 'cepting the baby, have had the measles, and croup, and mumps, and whooping cough, and earache, and toothache, and scarlet fever; and Tommy's cut his finger often, and Fanny once ran a needle in hers, and Georgie fell down and broke a tooth, and Anna hurt her foot so she couldn't walk for a week, and Mrs. Smith has headaches sometimes, and so does Mr. Smith, and this morning the girl broke a new dish they'd just bought, and Mrs. Smith said she was going to take it out of her wages, and Mr. Smith said she'd better not 'cause she might leave, and it's so hard to get good girls, so Mrs. Smith didn't do it, and Anna and Georgie say they're glad 'cause they like the girl. I think she's named Susan, and she's got a sister named Mary, and a brother named Bob. I've never seen them, but Anna says so, and—but it's getting late, I think I'd better be going."

"But the end of your story, Bettina?"

Bettina opened her eyes very wide and stared at me. "The end?" she exclaimed; "there isn't any end. The Smiths are still next door to us, and I expect they're going on living there as long as they pay their rent. Perhaps they'll die some day, but I suppose they won't 'less they catch something. There's Venus, the evening star, and Jupiter's the morning——"

"Good-night, Bettina," I interposed hastily; "good-night."

As I watch her little form vanishing across the lawn I sighed for the children that are no more, and for the good old fables that have been swallowed up by facts.

Horace S. Leftwich.

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THE GREAT MIDDLEWICK BANK ROBBERY

SUMMARY.

Mr. Bryant, *Manager of Middlewick Bank.*
Mr. Herbert Stewart, *Cashier.*
Mr. Rutherford, *Book-keeper.*
Mr. Alfred Taylor, *Detective.*
John Warren, *Old Watchman.*
Jack Burton, *New Watchman.*
Miss Denton, *Bryant's niece, and in love with Rutherford.*

£20,000 is stolen from the Bank one night while John Warren is asleep. The only persons apparently aware of the key to the combination lock are Mr. Bryant and Mr. Stewart. Taylor interviews Mr. Bryant and the new watchman, Jack Burton, who, by his movements, appears to be a colleague of Taylor, unknown to Mr. Bryant.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Taylor has to Run for it.

The night was balmy, with a gentle breeze blowing. It had been showery during the day so that the new moon was partially concealed by flying clouds which rendered its light treacherous and uncertain.

Alfred Taylor was in Middlewick in the character of a commercial traveller for a large clothing company. Indeed, it may be said that the character was not wholly assumed. A certain firm in the Metropolis had more than once experienced the benefit of his services in this direction. The head of the establishment was an old school friend of Taylor's, and when an order signed "A. Rollett" was received, he well knew from whom it came.

Taylor declined to receive the commission he thus well earned, but he could not always refuse the handsome suits sent to his residence by the wealthy clothing firm. In the course of the day, "Mr. Rollett" took three moderate orders in Middlewick and forwarded them to London. When night came, he resumed operations in another line. It has been intimated that Middlewick was not altogether unknown to him. Although few perhaps recalled the fact, only a couple of years previously he had spent a week there when engaged upon a counterfeiting case.

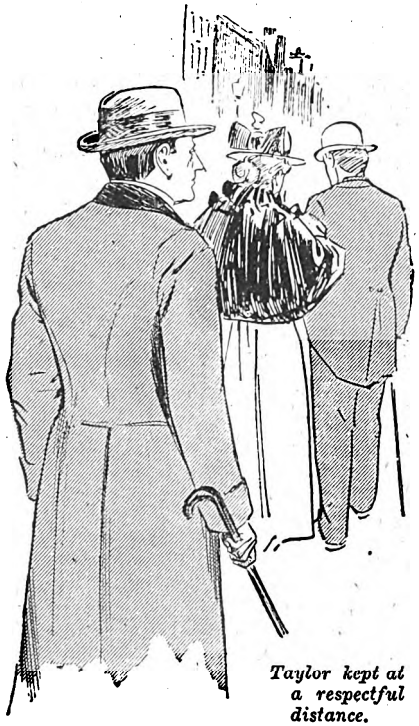
During the afternoon he strolled through the town, loitering on the outskirts for the purpose of ascertaining "how the land lay." He discovered the handsome residence of the bank manager and the more modest homes of the book-keeper and cashier. When night closed in, he was more familiar with the town than were a great many people who had spent their lives there.

Leaving the hotel, he sauntered along the High Street as though out for a stroll before turning in for the night. As was his custom, he carefully scrutinised every person he met, for a person following his profession must be observant at all times to save himself from going astray. There was little to excite interest, though hardly a face was lost upon him.

Suddenly he met a couple who at once arrested his attention.

They were Frank Rutherford, the book-keeper of the bank, and Mr. Bryant's niece, May Denton. So absorbed were they in each other, that he had no doubt of the lady's identity, and, confident of remaining unnoticed, he turned round and strolled after them.

The detective had no means of ascertaining whence they came, but judged that they had been spending the evening with a friend and that Mr. Rutherford was now escorting his betrothed to her home.



Taylor kept at a respectful distance.

Taylor managed to approach near enough to overhear some of their conversation, but they were talking in low tones, and most of what they said was lost. Turning into the quiet and more fashionable streets, they soon reached Mr. Bryant's residence. Few people were about at that hour, and he placed himself near the couple.

The detective of a story usually manages to get sufficiently close to the suspected parties to catch everything said without being observed, but, in real life, such an exploit is rarely accomplished, for the reason that a man or woman needs only to be on guard to frustrate the attempt.

If the couple had spoken in a little louder tones, or had their faces been turned towards instead of away from the officer, he might have kept the thread of their conversation, but had they faced him they would have immediately noticed his attempt to play the eavesdropper.

The lovers walked slowly while Taylor kept at a respectful distance intently listening and on the watch.

"Can it be possible, Frank?"

As the young lady asked this question, she turned her head sideways and looked up in the face of her companion. The words reached the detective distinctly, but the tones of Rutherford were lower and deeper.

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He glanced away, as though he saw something . . . across the street.

Taylor did not catch his answer but was quite sure it was in the affirmative for the girl quickly used the feminine expression: "It is awful. I would rather die."

Again Rutherford's response was inaudible; then they walked on in silence until "Glenmora" was reached.

The depression evident on both their faces must have had another cause than their parting, which was for but a few hours. That cause, Taylor decided, could be but one—the bank robbery.

"They may have conspired to take the money for themselves and now that the deed is done are filled with alarm, and perhaps remorse. Consummated crime is not half as rosy as imagination paints it."

The moon came out from behind the clouds and showed Charles Bryant smoking on the verandah. He was evidently waiting for his niece.

Seeing him, and in view of the lateness of the hour, Rutherford parted with his *fiancée* at the gate, instead of accompanying her to the door. Mr. Bryant waved his hand in salutation to his employé, who returned it in a somewhat more subdued style, but neither spoke.

"I hope he doesn't recognise me," thought Taylor, who had made a few unimportant changes in his personal appearance. "Rutherford is more likely to identify me."

The halt of the young couple for a few seconds at the gate caused the detective to pass close by them. While doing so he glanced away, as though he saw something which interested him across the street. There was silence between them while he was nearest them, but just before he came up and immediately after they exchanged a few sentences.

"You haven't uttered a word, Frank, to anyone?"

"No, and shall not."

"Do you think *he* suspects?"

"I am sure he does not."

"You are certain there is nothing in your manner likely to arouse his suspicions?"

"I could not be more careful. Little does he think that I never slept a wink last night, and will not fare much better to-night."

"Be sure to rest in the day then. You must not let your health suffer, you——"

These were the last words that Taylor caught. He heard the murmur of voices, but nothing further intelligible. Still looking across the street, as though his interest centred there, he was able, over his shoulder, to watch the lovers.

Miss Denton, after bidding her escort an affectionate good-night, passed through the gate which he held open for her. He lifted his hat, turned round and walked rapidly towards his home. The detective would have been glad to follow him, for he was in the mood to believe that the least trifle might give him one of the clues that he was seeking. Such a course, however, would have been imprudent. Rutherford would notice the act, and it would arouse his suspicion. The first duty of the detective in shadowing a person is to make certain that he himself is neither shadowed nor an object of suspicion to the one under surveillance.

Taylor walked on until he arrived at Cross Street. A few minutes brought him within a stone's throw of Rutherford's abode. Sauntering along in the same aimless manner, Taylor remained upon the opposite side of the street with

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his whole attention fixed upon the cottage where lived the suspected young man.

No one was in sight. The lower part of the house was in darkness, but a light shone from the upper front room. A quick glance to right and left showed Taylor that he was still alone. Stepping back into the shadow of the doorway of a shop, where the glare of the street lamp could not reach him, the detective waited and watched. If the young man was in his room, the light would soon be extinguished; if it continued, he was not there. The blind was down so that even had the position of the watcher been more favourable, he could not have caught a glimpse of the interior.

Five, ten minutes passed, and there was no change. Then the shadow of a person suddenly appeared on the blind, passing across it like a figure on a magic-lantern slide, but it was a woman's form. Brief as was the glance he caught, the watcher recognised it as the outline of an elderly person.

"It's his mother," was the conclusion, "she is waiting for him."

As if in confirmation, the blind was now hastily drawn up and the figure of the old lady was seen for a minute as she looked out on the still, spring night. Her action was that of one expecting the coming of someone who came not.

Taylor shrank back, though he knew it was impossible for anyone in her position to see him. The woman waited but a moment, and then withdrew after pulling down the blind.

"He hasn't returned home. Where can he be?"

Manifestly nothing was to be gained by staying where he was in the shadow of the door, so Taylor decided to carry out the original purpose he had in view when he left the hotel. He took a step forward, but as he did so, someone approached and he drew back. It was a policeman not a dozen paces distant. The detective was annoyed for this boded trouble. His position was such that the officer was likely to call him to account and probably take him into custody. Nothing serious would result beyond inconvenience and delay. If he were compelled to give an account of himself, and it should not prove satisfactory, he had only to appeal to Mr. Bryant, whose word would secure his release, but to be locked up would interfere with several plans he had in mind.

The lumbering policeman rushed after him.

He therefore shrank back as far as he could in the shadow of the door, hoping the guardian of the peace would pass him unnoticed. So he did, in his slow swinging step, looking neither to the right nor to the left and probably seeing nothing. All would have gone well but for an unexpected occurrence. The officer had passed a little way when the window directly above Taylor's head was raised.

"Hi, there," called out a guarded voice to the policeman. He stopped short and looked in the direction whence the voice came.

"What is it?" he asked.

"He's in the doorway below."

"Who?"

"The burglar; he's been there half-an-hour trying to pick my lock. Quick, and you've got him!"

His eyes were fixed on the entrance to the bank.

Taylor was plainly in for it. He saw he must do one of two things. Wait and quietly surrender, with a night's incarceration as a certainty, or make a dash for liberty. On a spurt he could run a short distance with anyone, and so decided on the latter course. Darting out of the door, he sped down the street like a deer. A couple of shrill whistles, and the lumbering policeman rushed after him. The fugitive knew he could distance his pursuer in a fair race, but he dreaded being stopped by the other officers who were sure to be attracted by the whistling. His previous acquaintance with the town now served him well. After running a short way he darted across the street. As in a dream he noticed the raising of windows, the thrusting out of heads, and the excitement caused by the whistle, but he was fast gaining on his pursuer.

Darting round the first corner, he slowed down to a walk. He was in danger of meeting some other policeman who, if he saw him running, would certainly call him to account. A quick glance showed Taylor that his fears had been ungrounded, and he indulged in another run that quickly took him to the next corner which he passed at the same deliberate pace as before. It was well he did so, for within a yard or two he came face to face with a blue-coated officer.

The latter scrutinised him sharply, and to forestall any troublesome questions, the detective remarked:

"I think I heard a whistle. Did you notice it?"

"Where have you come from, young man?" asked the policeman in turn, not fully satisfied with his question.

"I came from round the corner."

"Well, what's your name then?"

"I'm Alfred Rollett, commercial traveller for the best clothing firm in the United Kingdom. If you can help me get the order for the suits of the Force in Middlewick, I'll make it all right with you. Do you think it worth your while?"

"Go on with you," replied the constable, hastening in the direction indicated.

Taylor resumed his walk and was soon beyond danger of further molestation.

A quarter of an hour later he passed slowly by the bank which had been the scene of so striking an occurrence less than forty-eight hours before. This was the objective point of his excursion.

Glancing up and down the street, he paused for a moment, but just then a pedestrian came in sight walking quickly. Taylor continued his stroll until the stranger disappeared,

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when he stood still for a minute, looking keenly up and down the street. The coast at last seemed clear and he again walked briskly towards the bank. When opposite, he glanced sharply to right and left, and gave a low whistle, to which the response was immediate and satisfactory.

CHAPTER IV.

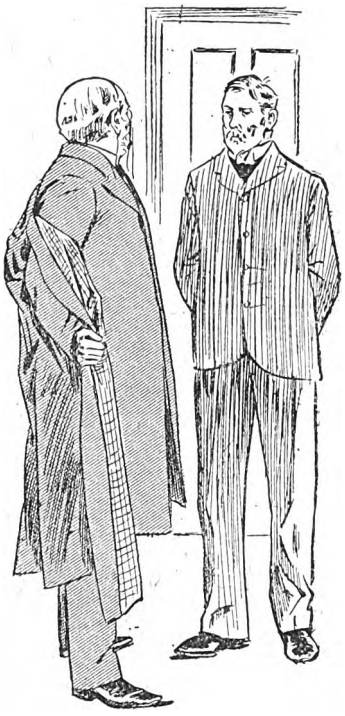
"Sh!"

The reply to the detective's guarded signal was a soft, creaking sound, as if made by the cautious opening of a door. His eyes were fixed on the entrance to the bank under the glare of the street lamp. He was not mistaken when he fancied he saw one half move gently inwards, as if drawn by the hand of a person standing behind it. Taylor whistled softly again, and the door moved back further, dimly showing the face of a man through the opening.

The detective stepped briskly up the stone steps, and into the bank as though he were the shadow of one of the drifting clouds overhead. Then the door once more closed behind him, and the key grated gently in the lock.

"It's all right," whispered the new watchman; "I've been on the look-out for you for some time, and I made sure no one saw you."

The man led the way to the manager's room, where, as in various other parts of the bank, a dim light was burning. The blinds were down, so that the sharpest eyes could detect nothing from the outside. Seating themselves by the table, the two men began to talk softly together. Not once did their voices reach the pitch that anyone attempting to listen from the street could have caught the faint hum and murmur of the speakers.



Commenced pulling off his overcoat.

For fully half-an-hour their conversation continued. Had Mr. Bryant known of it he would certainly have doubted the detective's singleness of purpose when he so heartily assured him he had done the right thing in accepting Burton on the mere strength of a written testimonial.

The couple were still talking when both were startled by someone fumbling at the outer lock, as if seeking admittance. As would have been natural, the two men, after the first shock, were as cool as before.

"That's the Manager," said Burton.

"It will hardly do for him to find me here," observed the detective, glancing round for some place of concealment; "I'll wait in there till he's gone," he added, pointing to the cupboard in which he had taken refuge that same afternoon.

He stepped inside and drew the door after him.

"He may take a fancy to look in there," remarked the watchman, turning, as he spoke, the key in the lock, and placing it in his pocket. Then he went to the front door, where the fumbling at the lock was still plainly audible. Whoever the visitor was he could not open the door, for the good reason that the watchman's key was on the inside.

"Who's there?" Burton demanded in a gruff tone.

"It is I, Mr. Bryant," was the reply.

"Step back from the door so that I can have a look at you," demanded Burton. "I must know it's you before you come in here at this time of night."

The Manager did as requested and the watchman recognised him—as, in fact, he had done the moment he spoke. The key was turned and once more the door was drawn inward.

"Have you anybody with you?" the watchman asked, peering out into the dimly-lighted street.

"I am alone."

The guardian of the building relocked the door and then faced his superior with a look and manner which plainly asked his business in coming to the bank at that unseemly hour.

"I am so disturbed over the robbery," Mr. Bryant explained, "that I cannot sleep. You will excuse me when I say that, despite the high recommendations you brought, I did not feel quite easy concerning you. I therefore decided to come down and see how things are for myself."

As he spoke, he walked to his room, and took the very chair that had been occupied a few minutes before by the detective who was now concealed within half-a-dozen feet of him.

"Well, and are you satisfied?" inquired the watchman with the assurance of a man who knows that there can be but one answer to his question.

"Quite," replied the Manager, leaning back in his chair with a weary air. "That was a good idea of yours making me step away so that you could see me before allowing me to enter."

"Yes, a good thing for you."

"What do you mean?"

"Had you not done as I requested, I would have opened the door about a couple of inches and put a bullet through you."

"But supposing there had been two or three of us?"

"Each of the five chambers of my revolver is loaded. I don't think I would have missed with them all."

The self-confidence with which this was said won the admiration of the manager.

"You'll do," was his comment. "If Warren had been half as watchful last night, the Middlewick Bank would be better off by twenty thousand pounds than it is at present."

As Mr. Bryant spoke, he commenced pulling off his overcoat. As was his custom, he stepped to the cupboard to hang it on one of the pegs within. He evidently intended to spend a considerable time at the bank.

"Bless me," he exclaimed, on finding the door locked; "that is too bad, but I have a key in my pocket." He drew out a bunch and tried one after another, while the detective on the inside prepared himself for the meeting. The watchman waited with a grim smile, carefully concocting the exclamation he intended giving at the presence of his visitor when he should be discovered.

But none of the keys fitted, and Mr. Bryant returned them to his pocket.

"It makes no difference," he remarked, proceeding to don his coat again, with the watchman's assistance. "There's no occasion for me to stop here.

"Come and lock the front door after me. I'm satisfied with you."

The watchman did as requested, bade his employer "good-night," locked the big front door behind him, and then returned and released the detective.

"Confound it," exclaimed the latter, as he stepped into view, with a flushed face. "If I'd been in there ten minutes longer it would have been a choice between kicking the door

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open or smothering to death. The old fellow would have been startled, but I think we could have satisfied him everything was all right."

"There would have been but little trouble about that. You could have pleaded the same errand as he, and that,

It was a letter.

on hearing me open the door to someone you slipped in there to note what might be said. But it would have been awkward to have explained how the key came to be lost and why you didn't come forth on finding who the caller was. On the whole, I am glad he didn't discover you."

"So am I," assented the detective.

Instead of departing, as it would seem Taylor might have done, now that his business with the watchman was finished, he resumed his former seat, and the two continued to smoke until past midnight. Finally, the detective arose, yawned, flung away his cigar, and said he would go back to the hotel where he had engaged quarters the night before.

The two strolled leisurely from the manager's room along the open space behind the counter and paused a few minutes in front of the heavy outer doors. It was profoundly still, and they spoke in even lower tones than they were accustomed to use.

"Sh!" suddenly exclaimed the watchman, raising his hand, "there's someone on the steps again." The noise was faint, but both heard the cautious footsteps of a person walking up the three steps that led to the bank entrance.

They were all attention, when an almost inaudible rustling caught their ears. Still listening intently, the watchman suddenly gripped the arm of his companion and pointed to the bottom of the door. Something white gleamed there, and was coming into plainer view each moment. It was a letter which someone was stealthily pushing under the door from outside.

"Quick! Be ready to follow him," whispered Burton.

The watchman quickly turned the big key and drew back the heavy door of the bank, but, despite long practice, there was necessarily a slight delay, for such heavy objects cannot be snatched to and fro like ordinary doors.

Without stopping to notice the letter at his feet, the detective rushed through the opening directly it was presented and was soon outside.

He expected to see the fleeing figure, but a hasty glance round showed no one in sight. He stood irresolute, undecided what to do.

Meanwhile the watchman had been more observant. Middlewick Bank stood at a corner. The party who pushed the letter under the door completed the action before the watchman turned the key. Indeed he must have been moving off even as the grating sound warned him of his danger. Instead of darting up, down or across the street, he whisked round the corner.

Fearful lest the detective should blunder, Burton thrust his head through the partly open door and called: "He's gone to the left. Quick and you'll catch him."

"Why didn't I think of that?" muttered Taylor, following the proffered advice.

The faint moonlight and the nearest lamp gave out slight illumination, but he caught a glimpse of a shadowy figure vanishing in the distance, and was after it like a deer. The detective had little doubt of his ability to run down any ordinary fugitive.

But the race had barely begun when it ended. Before the pursuer had well seen his man, he was out of sight. Thinking he might have darted into a doorway, or behind some object for concealment, the detective continued, though at a moderate pace. Suddenly he observed someone coming towards him sauntering slowly along. Taylor instantly slowed down to an ordinary walking pace, his purpose being not to alarm the other into a renewal of his flight.

The newcomer proved to be one of the town police, his height, looks and manner proving he was not the individual whom the detective was so anxious to meet.

"That tale won't do."

"Would you be kind enough to tell me whether you saw a man running just now?" asked Taylor courteously.

"Yes, sir, I did," was the gruff response.

"Where is he—which way did he go?"

"The chap I saw running is the one that I'm talking to,

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and I want to know what's the meaning of it all? If I ain't mistaken, I've met you before, sir."

"Perhaps you did, but I saw a suspicious-looking fellow a few minutes ago who I think was after my watch."

"That tale won't do," warned the policeman. "I'll let you off this time, but if you don't go straight home, I'll run you in at once."

"You're rather down on a man," said the detective, assuming a meekness which he was far from feeling, "but I'll take your advice. Good-night."

"It's just as well for you," said the constable, walking on in the direction of the bank.

The detective saw that he had made a bad impression and he dared not return to the watchman until he was sure the way was clear. Evidently the policeman was only too anxious to carry out his threat if he only could find an excuse for doing so.

But it was easy for the detective to avoid another meeting with him. He turned into a by-street, going over the route he had traversed several times that evening, until, confident that the way was once more clear, he came back to the vicinity of the bank.

The watchman was on the look-out for him. Once more the signal was promptly answered by the opening of the door, and, as cleverly as before, he entered the building, where the couple again made their way to the room they had lately occupied.

"What a blunder," exclaimed Taylor, as he dropped into a chair. "Instead of darting round the corner, the instant I was outside, I stood staring like an idiot, until the fellow had time to get beyond my reach."

"Did you see nothing of him?"

"Only a parting glimpse, and the next minute I barely missed running into a policeman. Do you think he could have been the one who put the letter under the door?"

"Policemen have been known to be mixed up in all sorts of shady affairs, but the man whom I saw bolt round the corner was not an officer."

"Did you see him?"

"No, it wasn't necessary to do so to be sure of that. Those men wear heavy boots, and some few of them can run on a spurt, but this man, whoever he was, had on slippers. He may have darted into some opening door which was waiting for him, in case of danger."

"But what about the letter?"

The watchman had already broken the seal and read the missive. He passed it to the detective, who, turning up the light, read the following:

Mr. Manajer Brient or hum it mai consern.

Weeve got the twenti thowsand pounds, and you can wisel for it. Harf a lofe is beter than know bred, and if yule call orf yore dogs and akt squar, weel giv yu bak 3 parts of the swag. Thats leting you orf cheep, & the onli chans yule ever get of geting any of the chink bak agane. If you agree, mark a cross in chawk on the front of the bank dore after bizness ours. It need not be a bigg won too attrakt attenshun; weel see it and akt squar. If yu doant, yoov seene the larst of yer thowsands, and its know gude tri-ing enny trix on us.

WUN OF EM.

"That shows," remarked Taylor, "that in spite of the cleverness of the job, they're novices to this business."

"What makes you think that?" inquired the watchman.

"Why do they offer to return three parts of the plunder after saying that they have it all so secure that it cannot be taken from them? It shows that they are afraid of being caught and are anxious to compromise the matter."

"Perhaps in some way they have discovered that their friend, Detective Taylor, has taken charge of the business," replied the watchman with a smile.

"If that were the case, they would withdraw the offer after my performance this evening. No, it's a blind; but can you make anything of the handwriting?"

"It's disguised, of course, and the spelling is too bad to be genuine. Here, wait a second."

Taking out his penknife the watchman drew the keen blade along the crease made by folding the letter and handed one half to the detective.

"That'll be enough for you. I'll see what I can do with the rest."

Each carefully folded and put away his portion. The detective also appropriating the envelope.

"Time's getting on," said the latter, once more rising to his feet. "I'll go to the hotel. If anything turns up, you can come and see me there. Probably I'll be here to-morrow night."

"Wait a minute," said the watchman, walking to the front door with the detective. "It would be rather awkward for you to run into that policeman again. Let's reconnoitre a bit." Each approached a window, and moved the blinds so as to peep out without being observed.

"Alf," whispered Burton a minute later. "Look over at the other corner and tell me whether there is anyone there."

The detective did so, and a minute later answered: "There's a man standing there."

"And he's watching the bank. I shouldn't be surprised if he is the gentleman who beat you in the race a little while ago."

"If that's the case, I will try it again," remarked the detective, fixing his gaze upon the opposite corner.

(To be continued.)

RESULT OF PICTURE-PUZZLE.

The Puzzle Picture which appeared in *Short Stories*, dated February 22nd, appears to have been as difficult of solution as its predecessor was easy. The consequence is that no one has been successful in putting all the parts of the picture together in their correct places. The gentleman coming nearest the solution is Mr. H. S. Uhlrich, Bryntirion, Chelsfield, Kent, whose attempt has eleven squares in the wrong places, and a cheque for £10 has been forwarded to him. The competitors, whose names are appended, have succeeded in getting within eighteen squares, or fewer, of the correct solution, and to each of them a gold-plated pencil-case has been awarded as a consolation prize.

W. J. Eglinton, Esq., 2, Burtop Rd., Lower Tooting; Mrs. A. Heath, 203, Farrant Avenue, Noel Pk., Wood Gn.; A. Sproat, 17, Elm Grove, Eccles New Rd., Weaste, Manchester; V. Tudor, 29, Fordingley Rd., Paddington, W.; Mrs. Armstrong, 17, Elm Grove, Eccles New Rd., Weaste, Manchester; B. Green, 57, Albert Mansions, South Lambeth Rd., S.W.; J. Boyle, 15, Union Pl., Perth Rd., Dundee; C. H. Fisher, 127, Mornington Rd., Leytonstone; Miss E. Fisher, 127, Mornington Rd., Leytonstone; G. Smith, 39, Roseville Terrace, Roundhay Rd., Leeds; Miss B. Doyle, 9, Waverley Rd., Harrow Rd., Paddington; Miss M. A. Smith, 110, Palace Gar. Terr., W.; W. Elliot, 6, Greek St., Soho Sq., W.; F. W. Leurs, Oswald Rd., Oswestry, Salop; F. Hodge, 1, Springfield Gar., Upper Clapton; J. G. Moore, 5, London Grange, Princes Rd., Liverpool; Master F. Prichett, 44, Crozier St., Lambeth; D. Denholm, 153, West George St., Glasgow; R. Robertson, 167, Perth Rd., Dundee; J. R. Parker, 77, Brackenbury Rd., Preston, Lancashire; M. Parker, 77, Brackenbury Rd., Preston, Lancashire; J. A. Kennedy, 11, Blindgate St., Coleraine, Ireland; W. Davis, 41, Shankhill Rd., Belfast; T. Alexander, 2, Astbury Rd., S.E.; G. Stenlake, 9, Paradise Pl., Stoke, Devonport; W. G. Brown, 364, West Green Rd., Tottenham; Mrs. E. Brooks, 32, Claremont Rd., Alexandra Pk., Manchester; W. Matthes, 9, Regina Rd., Tollington Pk., London; J. King, 25, Belfast St., West Brighton; G. S. L. Gore, 23, Gay St., Bath.

84	56	42	20	26	59	38	45
12	32	64	22	86	40	29	67
27	60	52	21	31	19	4	14
69	34	63	82	9	62	64	47
28	3	37	76	23	7	87	85
36	53	50	17	30	2	79	70
73	55	24	38	6	57	16	81
8	46	44	25	42	77	39	66
13	1	51	43	18	88	10	24
71	48	41	5	58	61	80	74
15	11	68	83	33	78	54	62

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LEGENDS OF WOLFVILLE.

BY "DAN QUINN."

Wolfville is a Cattleman's Settlement in Arizona, and the Characters in these Legends are Cowboys.

No. 8.—The Story of Wilkins.

"No; I don't reckon I ever cuts the trail of this yere Wilson you mentions once. If I does, the fact's done pulled its picket pin, an' strayed from my recollections."

I had recalled the name of a former friend, one Wilson, who, sore given to liquor, had drifted to Arizona many years before and disappeared. Suggesting the name to the old cattle-man, I had asked if he had met such a name and character in his Wolfville rambles, and received the above reply.

As often chanced, however, the question bore fruit in a story. It frequently needed but a slight blow from the rod of casual inquiry, and the fountains of my old friend's reminiscences gushed forth.

"No, I never crosses up with him," observed the old cattle-man; "but speakin' of Wilson puts in my mind a gent by the name of Wilkins, who, it's some likely, is as disrepootable as your old pard Wilson."

"What about Wilkins?" I asked. "Any story with him?"

"Nothin' thrillin'," answered the old gentleman; "nothin' you'd stay up nights to hear, I don't reckon. It's Wilkins' daughter who's the only redeemin' thing about the old Cimmarron; an' it's a heap likely right now it's her I remembers about instead of him.

"Not at all," he continued. "I don't mind onfoldin' as to Wilkins, nor yet of an' concernin' his daughter. You see, this Wilkins is herdin' round Wolfville when I first trails in. I never does know where he hails from. I don't reckon, though, that he ever does grade no ways high, an' at the crisis I'm mentionin' his speshul play is gettin' drunk mostly, an' not allowin' to hurt himself none with work.

"'Workin' with your fins,' says Wilkins, 'is low an' onendoorin' to a gent with pride to wound. It ain't no use, neither. I knows folks as works an' folks as don't, an' you can't tell one from which. They gets along entirely similar.'

"'But how you goin' to live?' says Dave Tutt, when he makes this remark once, an' who is fussin' with Wilkins for bein' so ridiculous and shiftless.

"'That's all right about my livin',' says Wilkins; 'don't you all pass restless nights on my account. Go read your Scriptures; read that bluff about feedin' the young ravens an' sparrows. Well, that's me this trip. I'm goin' to rap for a show down on them promises, an' see what's in 'em.'

"'The camp ain't long on Scripture, nohow,' says Dave Tutt, 'an' I'm short partic'lar. It's your game, though, an' your American jedgment goes soopreme as to how you plays it.'

"This yere Wilkins lives in a wickey-up out on the aidge of town, an' a girl, which she's his daughter, about nineteen years old, keeps camp for him. No one knows her well. She stays on her reservation mighty close, an' never seems to show much in town. I notices her in the Store once, buyin' some salt hoss, an' she ain't no dream of loveliness, neither, as to looks.

"Her face makes you feel she's a good people, though, with her big soft eyes. They has a tired, broke-down look, like somehow she's been packed more'n she can carry, an' has two or three notions about layin' down with the load.

"It's mebby two weeks after Cherokee Hall plugs the man from Red Dog one day when we're all in the Red Light takin' our forty drops. Sam Enrich brings up this subject of Wilkins.

"'It has been a question with me,' he says, 'how this old shorthorn and his girl manages for to make out, an' while I care none whatever for Wilkins, it ain't no credit to a live camp like this to permit a young female to suffer, an' I pauses here to add it ain't goin' to be so no more. Yesterday, allowing to bushwhack some truth about 'em, I waits till I sees old Wilkins start over to the corral, and then I goes projectin' round for the facts. I works it plenty cunnin', an' sorter happens up to the old man's tepee. I calls the girl out an' puts it up I wants to see her paw a heap on some business.

"'I wants to meet him speshul,' I says.

"'Well, he ain't here now,' says the girl, 'so whatever'l you do?'

"'I don't reckon you could prance round some an' find him for me, could you, Miss?' I says.

"'So the girl,' continued Enright, 'which her name is Susan, she says, puts on her shaker an' goes stampedin' off, an' while she's gone I injuns and spies round a whole lot, an' comin' down to the turn, Wilkins and that girl ain't got a blame thing to eat. The question now is, what action does Wolfville take at a juncture sech as this?'

"'What's the matter with takin' up a donation like they does for a preacher an' give it to the girl?' says Dan Boggs.

"'You couldn't open your game that away, nohow,' says Doc. Peets. 'That's all accordin' to Hoyle for sky pilots and missionary people, but a young female a holdin' of herse'f high would refuse your money. Thar's nothin' ketches me like a female of my species in distress, an' I minds offerin' to stake a lady who's lost her money somehow back in St. Louis once. This yere female was strange to me entire, but if she had knowed me from way back she couldn't a blazed up more

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frightful. The minute I pulls my money on her she goes cavortin' off too hostile to talk. It takes me ten minutes to get her back to the agency to apologise, an' even then she glares an' snorts like she's liable to stampede again. No, you don't want to try an' give this girl no money. What we needs is to hunt up something for her to work at an' pay her for it.'

"'The Doc.'s right,' says Enright; 'an' the thing is to find something for this yere lady to do. Any member with a notion on the subject can't speak too quick.'

"'No gent need take my remarks as personal,' says Burns, who runs the Red Light, 'as nothin' invidious is intended, but I rises to say that a heap of my business is on credit. A man comes in free an' sociable, names his sozodont, an' gets it. If he pays cash, all right.

"'"You names your day to drink, an' you names your day to pay," is my motto, as you all knows. This bein' true, under present exigencies what for a scheme would it be for me to get an outfit of books, day books, week books, ledgers, an' the rest of the lay-out, an' let this yere girl keep 'em a whole lot? I throws out this as a suggestion.'

"'I ain't a-meanin' nothin' against Burns' suggestion,' says Texas Thompson, 'but in my opinion this camp ain't ripe for keepin' books as yet. Things like that havin' to be lived up to by degrees. I've knowed a heap of trouble come from keepin' books, an' as long as we've a peaceful camp let's keep it that away.'

"'That settles it,' says Burns; 'thar's enough said, an' I don't keep no books.'

"'You alls present knows me,' says Cherokee Hall, who turns faro in the Red Light, 'an' most of you has met me frequent in a business way. Thar's my game goin' every night reg'lar. Thar's nothin' tin horn about it. It ain't no skin game neither. Any gent with doubts can step across the street an' test my box, which he'll find sittin' all comfortable on the layout a waitin' his convenience. It ain't been usual for me to blow my own bazoo to any extent, an' I only does it now as being preliminary to the statement that my game ain't no dead fall, an' is one as a respectable an' virchus female could set in on with perfect safetiood to her reputation. This yere lady in question needs light, reg'lar employment, an' I lets it fly that if she wants in on any sech deal I'll pay her fifty dollars a week to hold down the chair as lookout for my game.'

"'Cherokee's offer is all right,' says Enright; 'it's good talk from a square man. Women, however, is partic'lar, an', like horses, they shies at a heap of things thar ain't no danger in. You sees, a woman doesn't reason nothing. She jest feels, an' mighty likely this young person is loaded to the guard with notions against gamblin' an' sech as would send her flyin' at the bare mention. The fact is, I thinks of somethin' similar, but has to give it up. I figgers, first dash out of the box, that a safe, easy trail to high ground is to give her a table an' let her deal a little "stud" for the boys. This yere wouldn't be no risk, an' is a shore thing for nine or ten dollars a night. Bein' a benevolence, I know the boys would set in mighty free, an' the trouble would be corralled right thar. With this yere in my mind I tips her gently about our various game when I calls for her paw; an', to tell the truth, she takes it reluctant an' disgusted at the mere idee. Of course, we has to stand these things from women, so we might as well p'int up some other way. an' no time lost.'

"'Don't you all reckon for to make a special rake on all poker goin' same as about that Yaller House man might be an ondefeasible way to get at the neck of this business?' says Dave Tutt. 'I merely asks it as a question.'

"'That wouldn't do,' says Doc. Peets. 'But, anyhow, here comes Wilkins now, an' if, as Enright says, they're out of chuck up his way something ought to be done at once, an' I guess I'll jest lose a small bet to the old shorthorn until such time as we devises some scheme all reg'lar.'

"'Hello, Wilkins!' says Doc., mighty gay an' genial, 'how's things stackin' up?'

"'Mighty ornary,' says Wilkins.

"'Feel like makin' a bet?' says Doc.

"'What do you all want to bet at?' says Wilkins.

"'Oh,' says Doc. Peets, 'I'm feelin' a heap careless about what I do bet at. S'pose I goes you ten dollars' worth of grub the Lordsburg buckboard don't show up none to-day?'

"'If I had ten dollars I'd about call you a lot on that,' says Wilkins, 'but I'm a poor cuss, an' ain't got no Red Light whisky chips you ain't usin', be you? S'pose you all look in your bags and sees. I'm needin' of a drink mighty bad.'

"The man looks some queer about the eyes, an' more'n usual shaky, so we gives him a big drink, an' he sorter braces up.

"'I'll back Wilkins' end of that bet you offers, Doc.,' says Tutt, 'so consider it made, will you?'

"'You are offerin' to bet grub,' says the old man, powerful peevish and fretful, 'what for do you want to bet grub? Why don't you bet money, so I gets what I wants with it? It's my money when I wins. Mebby I don't want no grub. Mebby I wants clothes, tobacco, or whisky. You ain't no sport, Doc., to go for to tie up a bet with a string like that. Gimme another drink, someone. I'm most dyin' for some.'

"The old man 'pears like he's mighty sick that away, so thar's nothin' for it but to give him another hooker, which we does accordin'.

"'I'm feelin' like I was shot hard by something,' he says, 'an' I don't like for to go home till I'm better, an' scare Sue. I reckon I'll sorter camp down on this monte table for an hour till I comes round.' So Wilkins curls up on the table, an' no one notices him for twenty minutes, when along comes rattlin' up the Lordsburg mail.

"'You wins the bet, Wilkins,' says Peets. 'Come over to the store, and cut out your stuff.'

"The old man acts like he don't hear, so Doc. shakes him up some. No use; thar ain't no get up in him.

"'Looks like he's gone to sleep for good,' says Doc.

"Then he walks round him, shakes him, an' takes a look at his eye, a-openin' it with his finger. Finally he stands back, sticks his thumbs in his belt, an' whistles surprised like.

"'What's up?' says Cherokee Hall. 'He ain't tryin' to work us for another drink, I hopes?'

"'Well, this is a deal,' says Doc. 'Ain't no humbug neither. Gents, I'm blessed if this yere old prairie dog ain't shorely up an' died.'

"We all comes up an' takes a look at him, an' Doc. had called the turn. Shore enough, there the old man lay, too dead to skin.

"'This is a hoss on us, an' no doubt about it,' says Enright. 'I ain't worryin' for Wilkins, as he most likely is ahead on the deal, but what gets me is how to break the news to this yere maiden. It's goin' to be a mighty hair-play. I reckons, Doc., you an' me better see to it ourselves.'

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"So they goes over to Wilkins' wickey-up an' calls the young girl out, an' Enright begins tellin' her mighty soft an' good as how her paw is took bad down to the Red Light, but the girl seems to get it as right as if she sets picket for it a month.

"'He's dead,' she says, an' then she cripples all down alongside of the door an' begins to sob.

"'Thar ain't no use denyin' it, Miss,' says Enright, 'your paw struck in on the big trail, where the hoof prints all p'int one way. But don't take it too hard, Miss, thar ain't a man of us don't give you sympathy. What you do now is to stay right yere, an' the camp'll tend to the funeral an' get it up right an' jest as you say, you bein' mourner-in-chief. You can trust us for the proper plung; since we buries Jack King, obsequies is our long suit.'

"The little woman struggles through somehow, an' has her nerve with her. The funeral you bet is right. We ropes in a preacher, this time belongin' to some deep-water outfit over in Tucson. He somehow gets strayed, an' happens along our way square on the call, an' he jumps in an' gives them ceremonies a scientific whirl as ain't possible nohow to amateurs. All 'round we couldn't put on more dog if we'd been plantin' Enright; all, of course, on the little girl's account. Next day the outfit goes over to see her, to find out whatever she allows to do.

"'You see, Miss,' says Enright, 'anything you say goes. Not waitin' to learn its name even, I'm directed to say as how the camp backs your play an' makes everything good.'

"'I'm allowin' to go to the States,' says the girl, 'an' I'm obliged to you.'

"'We was hopin',' says Enright, 'as how you'd stay here. We sorter figgers you'd teach us a school or somethin'. Of course, thar ain't no papooses here yet, but as a forced play we arranges to borrow a small herd from Tombstone, an' can do it, too, easy. Then agin, a night school would catch us right; say one night a week. Thar's a heap of ignorant men in this yere camp as needs a night school bad. It would pan for fifty dollars a week, Miss, an' you thinks of it.'

"No, the poor girl couldn't think of it, nohow.

"'Of course, Miss,' says Enright, 'we ain't expectin' you to open this yere academy the first card off the deck. You nacheral needs time to line up your affairs, an' am likewise wrung with grief. You takes your leisure as to that. Meanwhile, of course, your pay goes on from now.'

"But the girl couldn't listen. Her paw had died, an' now she was due in the States. She says things is all right thar. She has friends as her paw never likes, but who's friends of her all the same. She'll go to them.

"'Well, Miss,' says Enright, mighty regretful, 'if that's how it lays I reckons you'll go, so thar's nothing for us to do but settle up an' pay you some dust we owes your paw. He bein' gone, of course, you represents.'

"The girl couldn't see how anyone owes her paw 'cause he's been too sick to work,' she says.

"'We owes him, all the same,' says Enright, mighty brief and ferocious. 'We understands well enough how we comes to owe him, don't we, Doc.?'

"'You bet your life we do,' says Doc., plenty prompt an' cheerful. 'We owes it for his nailin' them hoss thiefs when they trys to clean out the corral.'

"'That's it,' says Enright, 'for ketchin' of some rustlers as lays for our stock. It's all right, Miss, you needn't look so doubtful, you wouldn't if you knows this camp. It's the last outfit on earth as would go an' give money to people. It's a good straight camp, Wolfville is, but business is business, an' it ain't givin' nothin' away, be we, Doc.?'

"'Not much,' says Doc. 'It's enough for people to pay their debts, without stampedin' round givin' things away.'

"'That's whatever,' says Enright. 'So, Miss, me an' Doc.'ll vamos over to the Red Light an' get the dust, an' I reckons we'll be back in an hour. I s'pose we owes Mr. Wilkins about 500 dollars, don't we, Doc.?'

"'Tain't so much,' says Doc., mighty guileful, as he sees the girl archin' for another buck, so he pulls out a paper an' makes a bluff. 'Here it is—493.74 dollars. I puts it down all ackerate 'cause I don't allow no one to come round an' beat me none.'

"We all comes 'round an' makes up the pot to come up to Doc.'s figgers (which I wants to say right here Doc. Peets is the best edicated man I ever sees), an' the girl has to take it.

"Of course, this money lets her out right, an' she cries an' thanks us, an' the next day she takes the stage for Tucson. We're all thar to say good-bye an' wish the little girl luck.

"'*Adios*,' says Peets, takin' off his hat to her; 'it ain't down on the bills, but if you could manage to kiss this yare outfit once apiece, Miss, it would be regarded. You needn't be afraid, none. Some of 'em looks a little off, but they're all right, an' b'ar huggin' is barred.'

"So the little girl begins with Enright an' kisses us all, a-sobbin' meantime some free. As the affection proceeds Cherokee hangs back an' allows he'll pass.

"'Not any pass,' says Enright. 'Any man who throws off on kissin' that thar girl, she willin', needn't look for any luck but lynchin'.'

"'That settles it,' says Cherokee, 'I kissen this yere lady.'

"So he ups an' kisses the girl sorter hasty, like she's a hot flat-iron, an' backs into the crowd.

"'Cherokee makes me weary,' says Peets, who's ridin' herd on the play. When it comes his turn he kisses her slow an' rapturus, an' then looks contemptuous at Cherokee.

"When she's in the stage a-startin' Cherokee walks up all respectful.

"'You've been away from the States some time, Miss,' he says, 'an it's some possible you won't find things the way you expects. Now, you remember, shore, whatever game's bein' turned back there, if it goes ag'in you raise the long yell for a sharp called Cherokee Hall, an' his bank's yours to go behind your play.'"

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A Trial in Fiction

There is a time in the life of nearly every educated person when he feels that fierce, unconquerable desire to write—to put into words for the benefit of coming generations such thoughts and fancies as may occur to him or to her.

And, indeed, I believe one may wish to write without even possessing the thoughts to embody in one's effusions, so great is the fascination of seeing one's own writings in print.

To this curious malady I became an early victim. And the acceptance of an occasional poem by various weekly papers added fresh fuel to the unquenchable fire of literary ambition. At twenty-two I occupied a minor editorial position on a daily paper, and had had one or two stories accepted by one of the great magazines. Consequently, I began to feel rather important in a literary way, and this tendency was decidedly encouraged by compliments, sincere and otherwise, of those with whom I came in contact.

One of these, and one who from its beginning had taken a warm interest in my literary work, was a girl—Miss Katherine Merry. I had known Miss Merry almost from childhood and had always had considerable admiration for her. I looked upon her as entirely different from the other girls of my acquaintance. She was rather intellectual in her tastes, very fond of reading, and had even published some very creditable verses, although she was my junior by two years. She was not a girl to flirt with, and she absolutely disliked compliments. That is, she really did dislike them, differing in this respect from the majority of women, who may affect to despise flattery, but who are none the less susceptible to its influence. She and I were hail-fellow-well-met together to a more or less degree. We understood each other very well, were interested in each other's projects, and enjoyed comparing notes over our failures and successes.

One night, when it so happened that we were both dining at the same house, the conversation turned upon that much-mooted question as to whether such a thing as a platonic love were possible. Miss Merry and myself both argued warmly for the affirmative, and probably we each thought of our mutual friendship as an instance, although upon that point we kept silent, contenting ourselves with mentioning historic cases.

The other side, however, probably because those who constituted it were better informed and more able to express their ideas, had somewhat the best of the argument, and Miss Merry and I, although still unconvinced, were compelled to withdraw from the battle.

I walked home with the Merrys afterwards, and while her father and mother went ahead, Miss Merry and I strolled slowly after them, discussing the subject which had been under consideration at dinner.

"Why, of course it is possible," she said. "There are you and I."

"To be sure," I answered, "we are living flesh and blood evidence. By-the-way, I have a scheme. Why shouldn't we write a story together about a platonic friendship? I think we could work it up in great form."

"That's a capital idea," exclaimed Miss Merry. "You could furnish the man's ideas and I the woman's."

"Good! Already I behold the comfortable cheque for our labour."

"Oh, that is too bad. You are always putting a cash value on things. Remember, sir, that this is a story that is to show the world how plantonic friendships may and do exist."

"All right. When shall we commence work? You know we must talk our plot over first. To-morrow is my day off from the paper. Shall I call in the afternoon?"

"Yes, do, and we can take a walk and arrange the plot."

Thus it was arranged that we should collaborate in a story, and the following day, according to the engagement, I called at the Merry household.

Miss Merry came down ready for the walk, with her hat and gloves on. That was one of her characteristics—she never kept one waiting. It is little things like this that make you form a platonic friendship for a girl, if anything will.

"I've been thinking of a title for our story," she cried. "What shall we call it?"

"You must name it," I said, "that is part of your share of the labour."

"Very well, then, let us call it 'Two Friends.'"

"That's a capital idea. Now for the plot."

The plot was a hard thing to settle. The story must have some element to lend colour to it. Love of course, was barred out, and friendship must take its place; but how, and what incidents to make use of in order to portray it happily, was an extremely knotty and difficult question. One thing we fixed upon. There must be a noble sacrifice on the part of one or both of our characters. But of what nature and circumstances it should be we could not determine.

"Do you think," I inquired tentatively, "that such a friendship could rise superior even to love?"

"I don't know," hesitated Miss Merry.

"You see, I can't speak from experience, and novelists always set love on a pedestal above the other emotions."

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"True! But this other story of ours must not be formed on the theories of other writers. We must originate it entirely."

"I don't see how. Neither of us is in love or has ever been to my knowledge."

"Nor to mine," I returned hastily, perhaps because on this point a shadow of a doubt had crept over me.

But on due reflection I determined that I had answered with perfect frankness. No, I was not in love with Elsie Harwood by any means. I admired her very much, it was true, and I fancied that she rather liked me. I had seen a good deal of her during the past summer, and once or twice the idea had entered my head that she was much nicer than most girls, and that I liked to be with her. That was all. Why, I had not seen her a dozen times since she returned to the town.

Having thus disposed of the trifling doubt which assailed my conscience, I turned to Katherine, who had been busy planning meanwhile.

"There is only one way to do it," she cried.

"And that?"

"One of us must fall in love."

I confess that the idea staggered me at first, and it was with difficulty that I recovered breath enough to ask:

"Which of us?"

"Well," said Katherine thoughtfully, "I think you had better. The consequences are so much less apt to be dangerous for a man."

"Here, I don't know about that. Suppose I were really to fall in love and get married?"

"Just so. What of it? You must get married some time."

"But marriage is a thing a fellow doesn't want to jump into out of hand, in the manner you suggest."

"You goose! You need not fall head over heels in love; a mild case of imaginary love will answer the purpose."

"Suppose it should cause our friendship to break up?"

"Oh, consistency, thou art a jewel. Then how about our theory of platonic affection?" said Katherine, with a twinkle in her blue eyes.

"True enough," I replied. "I'll try it. I'll fall in love with Miss Harwood immediately."

"Oh, no, not with her, surely. She is so insipid and foolish."

Now I did not think Miss Harwood insipid or foolish at all, and Katherine's criticism nettled me somewhat, so that I answered rather stiffly that I supposed a fellow might choose for himself whom he was to fall in love with.

"Certainly," said Katherine, "you are free to fall in love with a wooden Indian if you wish."

Whereupon we walked in silence for some time, while the plot of our story made very little progress.

Insipid and foolish, indeed! I tried to recall any instance of these qualities to Miss Harwood, but could not. I only remembered that she had very large eyes and a very pretty mouth with the whitest of teeth. She was a rather *petite* and clinging sort of girl. At least that was my mannish definition of a woman who drew forth the chivalric instincts of a man. I thought of the long drives we had had together during the summer and how much I had enjoyed talking to her. Although she seldom said much she seemed to grasp my ideas, looking up to me the while with her big eyes in a confiding and trustful manner. "Oh, no," I thought, "she is anything but insipid." Whereupon Katherine, who must have guessed my thoughts, said:

"When you have finished thinking about Elsie, perhaps you will condescend to return to our story."

"Of course, my dear Katherine, you must really pardon the absent-mindedness of one who is so deeply in love."

We both laughed at this, and the laugh made things a little better between us. We agreed that our plot must form itself naturally, and the chief incident must be the falling in love of the hero with another girl. As for the sacrifice we had determined must play an important part in the story, we could not very well determine what it should be.

Miss Merry suggested that the hero should give up his sweetheart so as to prolong his friendship with his platonic friend. I reminded her that she had just expressed the sentiment that love or marriage would not interfere with such a friendship.

"But then his wife would probably be jealous," said Katherine. "The chances are ten to one that she would be an ignorant, empty-headed little fool."

This reply of Katherine's angered me, I scarcely knew why. I felt in her description of our hero's imaginary lover she had a certain person in her mind, and that person Miss Harwood. It was the first time I had ever known Katherine to be spiteful or anything else resembling it, and it annoyed me particularly, as I knew that Miss Harwood was not at all foolish, although she was not what one would call an intellectual girl.

We walked in silence for some time, and finally I gave utterance to the opinion that I did not think a man would give up his lover under the circumstances.

"If there is such a thing as a friendship such as we have in mind it must survive all barriers. It must be far above any such petty considerations as jealousy."

"I am sure no one said anything about jealousy," Katherine said rather pettishly. "I'm afraid that you flatter yourself."

"Oh, no! I don't mean anything like that," I answered hastily; "but here we are at your door, and we have made very little progress. When shall we have our next *séance?*"

"Can you come to-morrow evening?"

"Yes, and we will begin the story then."

But the next evening came, and the story was not begun. I called, and found Williams, a man I

Miss Merry came down ready.

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never cared very much for, talking away gaily to Katherine.

Williams was determined to stay as long as I, and as our story was, of course, not mentioned, I had to leave without making another engagement.

I went away in rather an angry mood, disgusted with Williams, who had always seemed to me too familiar with Katherine, annoyed because I fancied that Katherine herself had treated me somewhat coldly.

Williams had called on Katherine pretty frequently of late. Suppose she were to marry him. Why not? I disliked him personally, but I found upon sober reflection that I knew of absolutely nothing against the man. Other people liked him, men as well as women. He was of good family, well off, and, I remembered with distinct dissatisfaction, he was remarkably good-looking.

There was no reason in the world why Katherine should not marry him if she chose, even though I did not like him. At all events I thought I would speak to her about him, and see what she thought of him.

I never doubted but she would tell me her sentiments in regard to him, so great had our confidence in each other been ever since childhood.

I called on Miss Harwood the next day. She received me very graciously, and I spent a very delightful half hour with her.

Unconsciously, however, I began to compare her with Katherine's description of "an empty-headed little fool." Certainly she was very pretty, and her manner and everything she said were very charming. Her words were few, but carefully chosen, and that which they expressed were simple and to the point. But I went away with a new idea born into my brain, which grew hour by hour until I arrived at the conclusion that I did not, nor could I ever, love Elsie Harwood as a man should love his wife.

Side by side with this thought a companion idea evolved itself unconsciously. Indistinct and insignificant at first, it gradually assumed a magnitude and importance until it mastered my whole being, and then I knew that I could love but one woman—she who shared with me our so-called plantonic friendship and my literary collaborator.

In the meantime our story had made no progress at all. I had only seen Katherine in various public places, and she was always with some one—frequently Williams. They seemed very friendly towards each other. Indeed, I thought at times that I could detect love glances exchanged between them. I sighed to myself as I thought of the old days of our friendship and the happy confidence we had reposed in each other. "Alas," I thought, "it is all over, and our poor little story will never be written, I fear."

At last one day I called and found her alone. Neither of us spoke of the story at first, but different things entirely foreign to it. Finally I asked her about Williams—whether she cared for him or not.

"I do not see why you should ask me that question."

I must have asked the question in an unpleasant manner, for I could see that she was hurt. For several minutes she made me no answer.

"I do not see why you should ask me that question," she said slowly, with her eyes fixed upon the floor.

"I have a perfect right," I answered. "I want to know whether or not our friendship is to come to an end."

"It need never come to an end, under any circumstances."

"I do not believe it," I cried. "Katherine, if you marry that man, we can never be friends again. Tell me, do you care for him?"

Katherine laughed, and as I hate to be laughed at I grew angry.

"What about our theory that we are going to express in our story?" she asked.

"Oh, hang the story! This is real life, and I am in earnest. Do you love Dick Williams?"

"I like him very much."

"Would you marry him, then?"

"I call that question rather impertinent. Do you love Elsie Harwood? And will she marry you?"

Katherine laughed again, and my anger vanished. I suddenly realised that she had been making game of me.

"Katherine," I said, "you know whom I love. There is only one way that we can ever finish our story. Shall we collaborate for good?"

And she said "Yes." And we did. And one sunshiny spring day we wrote out this little story together, which is to prove that platonic friendship does not exist. And when we had nearly arrived at the end Katherine said: "How shall we finish it?" And I said "Like this," brushing back as I spoke the brown hair from her forehead to kiss it.

Esther Noanes.

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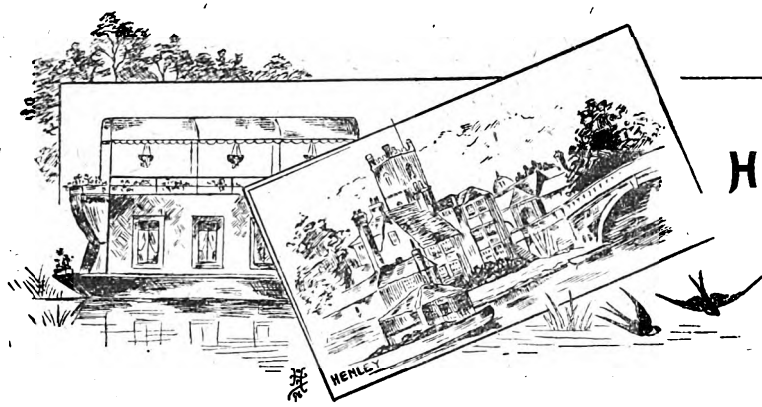

HOW I SAVED HIM.

I SHALL never forget that night.

The moon threw a pale, sickly light through the branches of the big trees that formed the forest of which we, in that out-of-the-way Virginian town, were so proud—that same moon by the light of which many a young couple were probably making love in all parts of the American continent.

It was no lovesick swain and sighing maid that the moon revealed to me. There upon the bit of turf where we had often enjoyed an impromptu picnic under the shadow of the trees on summer afternoons lay the body of a man who, but a few hours before, had held me in his arms in the garden at the back of father's house, and sworn to make me his wife, and called me "Sweetheart mine." Then he had said "Good-night," and started to walk across a corner of the forest to a farmhouse where he had recently taken up his abode as a summer visitor.

Who was he? I did not know. Yes, it may seem strange, but I was a young country girl ill-versed in the etiquette of introductions, or in the wickedness of mankind. All I knew was that he was just such a big, bronzed, bearded man as I had read of in books—not one of the uncouth Virginian farmers who formed the only male society that I had ever enjoyed. His beard was beautifully trimmed; he had a slight pointed moustache and curly hair, and he was dressed like one of the smart gentlemen I had seen in illustrations. I could not have dared ask him any inquisitive questions as to who he was, why he had to come to our little town, or why he seemed to know no one there, or to have any definite object in his visit.

I had met him casually one evening in the forest, when, after the heat of the day, I had let down my hair and scampered down the turf drive to enjoy the cool breeze and the stillness of the forest on the very spot where I now stood looking at him. On that evening as I stood still to take breath, and to wonder how girls in big cities could live without a forest, that man had stepped out from among the trees and asked me who I was, and where I got my pink cheeks and my beautiful locks. My cheeks had changed from pink to red, and he and I had sauntered back through the forest together until the sun had disappeared and the cold night air had warned me that I must be going home to father. And the man had kissed me. That was all the introduction we had, and I knew no other better form of introduction.

And now he lay there on the turf, looking so ghastly by moonlight, when I thought he had gone home long since, and I had only sought the spot for its association's sake—to recall the happy hour I had spent with him there on the first evening of our acquaintance.

Was he dead? Yes, it must be so. He looked so stiff and he hardly moved a muscle since the bullet had pierced his heart right before my eyes. I could not raise an alarm. Indeed, as I stood there I hardly noticed that the man who, unconscious of my presence, had fired the fatal shot, was nowhere to be seen.

I did not shriek. No. I only felt very, very cold, and my hands clasped one another so tightly that I felt as if they would never come apart. I had never seen death before, but I realised that I saw it now. Then I fell on my knees and crawled up to the man, and knelt over him and listened. But he did not breathe. Then I saw that his clothes were wet—oh, so wet—on one side, and blood was still trickling through the check tweed cloth which I had so admired at our first meeting.

I did not know the dead man's name; so could not call to him. It was all so wondrous strange that I did not seem even sorry—only overcome by the sight of a dead man by moonlight, a man who was to have been my husband, as I thought. But what was husband? What was lover? I know now; but I did not know then. To me he had only been a new kind of man, quite different to any I had known before. And, instead of treating me as an uncouth child, he had talked to me and made a companion of me—and kissed me.

And as I knelt and gazed at the stiff white face, so hard-looking now, with teeth firmly set, I saw in front of me a few yards on the other side of the body, a shadow suddenly cast on the ground, and a hand was gently placed on my shoulder.

Even then I was not frightened. I turned round and found the figure of a man bending over me. I sprang to my feet, and seizing him by the arms, turned him round so as to throw the light full on his face. A mere boy—at least I thought so, because he had no beard.

"Is he dead?" he asked.

"Quite dead."

"It is well."

"Well!" I almost shrieked. "What do you mean? Is it well that a man should be killed?"

"It is well," he repeated. "He was doomed——"

"To be murdered?" asked I.

"To be shot like a cur," said he.

"Who are you to dare speak of him like that?" I demanded as drops of perspiration came out upon my forehead.

"And may I ask what brought you to this spot at this time of night?"

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"To find the body of a murdered man, but not to be cross-questioned by his murderer," was the reply. And then, as I saw the young fellow's handsome face looking so hurt at what I had said, I took one of his hands in both mine, and added: "I did not mean it. You do not look like a murderer. You look so kind and young and good. Tell me, what does this all mean?"

"You are right at first," he said; "I am a murderer. I shot that man partly for your sake, and partly for my own satisfaction. He deserved it."

"Oh, do not say that," I pleaded. "What do you know of him or me? Who are you?"

"I know too much of him. I followed him to this neighbourhood. He fled here from New York to escape his fate; but I was not to be deprived of all I have lived for since I left England three months ago. Two years ago he married my sister in London and brought her over to New York, where, by continual ill-treatment and depriving her of the bare necessaries of life at a critical time, he killed her by inches. Happily, a friend of hers cabled me to come from London, and I arrived just in time to see the last of my poor sister.

"'Algie,' she said, 'do not put yourself out about me, but make it the object of your life to see that no other girl ever falls into his clutches. I fear I am not his first victim!'

"Well, hardly was his girl-wife—she was only twenty when she died—laid in her grave than this brute here got engaged to the daughter of a man who owns a big shop in New York. I met him one night coming out of her father's house, and as he came out I went in and told father and daughter the story of my sister's married life. Three days later he was being anxiously inquired after by a big man—the father of a pretty girl who had mysteriously disappeared from St. Joseph, Missouri—who made no secret of a six-shooter that he carried in his pocket. New York saw the blackguard no more; but I did not lose touch with him. By a queer coincidence I was at the railway station when he drove up and hurriedly asked for a ticket to your town over there. Two days afterwards I was after him, and I overheard what passed between you and him in your father's garden this evening. I feared it might be useless to interfere between you two in the ordinary way, so, to fulfil my promise to my dead sister, I appealed to my friend here," and he callously drew a revolver from his pocket.

"See," he said, "it only required one barrel, but I had five more ready if needed."

"But you must not stay here," I said, with a shudder at the thought of being the only witness against the man who had done this dreadful deed for my sake. "You must go at once. A train passes through B—— at two o'clock in the morning; you have over two hours drive, and you can get a conveyance at Simeon Martin's, and I will show you the way."

"No!" he said firmly, "that will not do. I will give myself up."

"Oh, don't—don't do that!" I cried. "Anything rather than that. Here, I will help you carry the body away to a spot where it may not be found for years. Come, see," and I half raised the corpse, "we can easily manage it between us."

"I must give myself up, and trust to a jury not convicting me," he replied.

"You shall not! No. I will not let you. You must go now, quick!" and I threw my arms round his neck, and looked up into his bonnie face, and implored and coaxed. But he only smiled such a brave smile upon me, and patted my shoulder and stroked my hair as I clung to him. "I must give myself up," he repeated, "and you must bear witness against me."

"That I will never do. I will lie. I will run away myself. I will kill myself. Ah, good! I know. I will say I murdered that man—that you took the revolver from me, and swore you would confess to the murder to save me. They know me here, and will believe me rather than believe a stranger."

"It cannot—shall not—be. I can prove that I have been hunting the wretch down, and have sworn to do for him. It's no good, little woman. You must give in, and you must not mind if they do hang me. I don't, very much. I've no one to care for now that my sister is gone."

"Yes, you have; you must care for me."

I knew not what I was saying, or perhaps not the full purport. I only knew that he must be saved. Oh, how handsome and defiant he looked. And I took his arm and said:

"Come, you must go, and I must send the men out to fetch the body. Father won't think it strange that I should be out here at night. I often come out for a long walk before going to bed You see I am but a wild country girl." And he bent forward and gave me a kiss on the forehead, such a different one to what he—that dead man—had given me.

"Where does the mayor live?" he asked. "I will go straight there."

Suddenly, as by an inspiration, the mention of the mayor reminded me of a farmer who, a few years back, had given himself up for killing a farm-hand: the man had attacked him in a fit of drunken frenzy. The only witness to the deed was the farmer's wife, and the mayor told the farmer that the evidence of a wife would not be taken against the husband. And the accused was still at liberty.

We had nearly reached the edge of the forest. I turned to my companion and said: "I can save you. You must give yourself up, but not to-day."

His face brightened only for a moment. "You do not know what you say, child. It is impossible."

"Listen!" said I. "Will you grant me one favour? Do not think badly of me. You will think I am mad, but I am not. Will you be my husband? Will you drive me away with you now to Q——? If we drive slowly we shall not reach there till to morrow morning. We will go straight to the mayor and get married. Then we can drive back. You can give yourself up and I will offer evidence against you. They cannot take a wife's evidence against her husband."

And who shall say that the marriage laws of America are too lax since our happy-go-lucky mode of tying the marriage knot enabled me to save the deliverer!

After the strange man was discharged from custody I told him he must go away and never see me again; I told him I had married him that he might enjoy freedom—not bondage.

But still he was firm. "No!" he said, "I will not go. I will give myself up—to you, my darling, to make your life a happy one." And he has done so. L. P. N.

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An Experiment in Psychology.

"What do you think of it, Tom?"

"Hanged if I know, old man; seems to me very like a hoax. What's your opinion?"

"No," said my chum, meditatively balancing the poker with which he had been stirring the fire. "I don't think it's that. You see these psychical research fellows are too jolly well in earnest to joke over the thing, and if an outsider meant to hoax anyone he'd practise on a believer, and not on a downright sceptic. Besides the address is all right," turning to a directory we had been consulting, "Dr. C. E. Manners, Ulverstone House, Brixton. Well, what are you going to do about it? To go or not to go, that is the question."

That *was* the question. A few days previously I had entered into a newspaper controversy on the subject of Pre-existence. It had always seemed to me a wild theory, and I had written a letter ridiculing the thing far more, perhaps, than the occasion warranted.

The immediate result was the following note:

Dear Sir,—I have read your letter in the *Gazette* of the 24th. I am aware I am taking a great liberty in asking you to call on me, but truth is desirable under any circumstances, and I can convince you that, far from being a mad dream, pre-existence is a reality. There seems something familiar to me in the style of your letter, but whether we have met before in another age or not I cannot tell—yet. But will you come and see me?—Yours,

C. E. Manners.

"You see, Bob," I said, continuing the conversation this invitation had caused, "it's such a curious affair. Why couldn't he come here? 'Met before in another age' sounds a bit like madness, eh? He's pretty sure of himself, too. He doesn't say he will discuss the matter—he's going to convince me."

"It'll take him a long time, if he only knew it," Bob jerked out, lighting his pipe, and speaking between the puffs. "Well, the only consideration is—is the game worth the candle? Of course, if you're not interested in the affair, don't go. There certainly doesn't seem to be much fun in it, but if he met you in a former age, you'll gain some useful knowledge of your own antecedents. I don't think *I* should care to rake up my last incarnation but one," he proceeded laughingly. "I might have too much on my conscience after it was all over. For all I know I might have been Nero, or Richard the Third, or Dick Turpin, and would perhaps recognise in the confounded tailor of mine one of my former victims, avenging his fifteenth century wrongs in the nineteenth century manner. But, of course, you're all right; you're a lawyer, and such matters wouldn't worry you."

"I think I'll go, if I've nothing else to do one evening. Here, let's toss for it. Heads I go."

"It's head," cried Bob, as I uncovered the coin.

Three evenings later, finding time very hard to kill (Bob had gone to the theatre with some of his friends, and I had no inclination for reading law), I decided to walk down to Brixton and try to find Ulverstone House.

I easily discovered the place, and it differed in no respect from the other detached villas, which formed the quiet road in which it stood. Three-storeyed, double-fronted, with a fairly large garden before it, it looked eminently respectable and orthodox.

I rang the bell, and a neat servant girl showed me into the doctor's study. While I waited I looked curiously round the room. There was nothing professional about it, and I certainly found no reason for believing the owner to be a man of remarkable character or eccentric ways and ideas. A table, filled with books and papers, stood in one corner, and, prominent among its contents, I noticed a recent treatise on re-incarnation, and a copy of the *Gazette*.

A large bookcase filled nearly the whole of one side of the room, and, from the further end, stretching across to the opposite wall, hung a heavy curtain, thus dividing the apartment. Before the door and windows hung other curtains. A few ornaments were on the mantelpiece, a few engravings on the walls, a luxurious armchair stood near the fire, and a cluster of incandescent lamps threw a brilliant light over the room.

I had scarcely time to notice my surroundings before the door opened again, and a gentleman entered and came towards me.

"'Mr. Scott, I am very pleased to see you," he said, "and must ask you to pardon me if my letter seemed strange. Won't you sit down? I think you will find this armchair more comfortable," crossing the room as he spoke and moving the chair slightly from the fire.

I sat down in silence, for there was something about him that effectually prevented me from using the commonplaces that spring to one's tongue on an intro-

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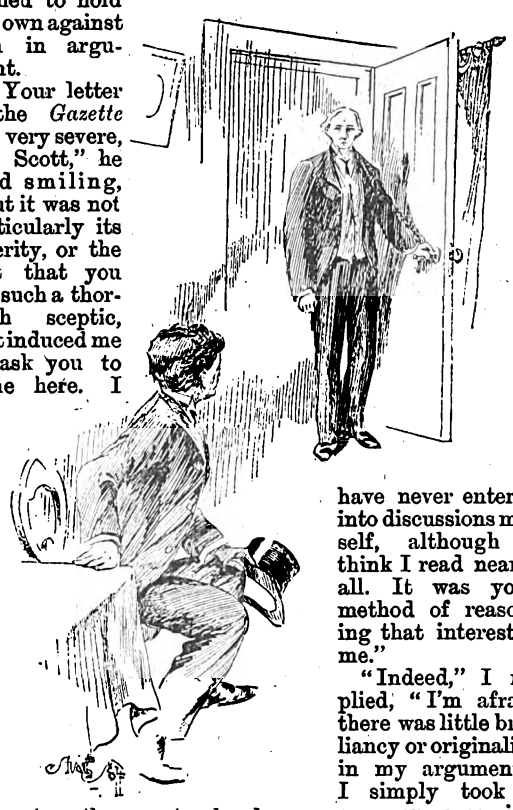
duction. Courtesy demands in most cases the polite expressions that mean so little and sound so graceful, but here it was different. It was no venerable form and face that made such phrases seem out of place. The doctor was of medium stature, well built, well dressed. His hair was grey—almost white. His face was clean shaven; by no means handsome, but the expression——!

It was that that checked the words on my lips. It seemed to me that knowledge was written in the eyes, on the lips, and in every line of his face. Not that which comes from books and study, but the knowledge which belongs to genius—which knows all things in their naked truth, and surveys them from a standpoint far removed from that of ordinary men. He himself had used conventional phrases, yet to me it seemed only a concession to the usages of that society of which I was a member, and to which as his guest I was entitled. I thought of the Sphinx of Egypt, and of an author I had once read who called its features the ideal of serene power and omniscience. But here was the *living* face speaking of power and knowledge in every movement. It was a revelation, and I felt awed before it.

The doctor first broke the silence. At the sound of his voice I tried to shake off the impression he had made, conscious that I should need all my self-possession if I wished to hold my own against him in argument.

"Your letter in the *Gazette* was very severe, Mr. Scott," he said smiling, "but it was not particularly its severity, or the fact that you are such a thorough sceptic, that induced me to ask you to come here. I have never entered into discussions myself, although I think I read nearly all. It was your method of reasoning that interested me."



A gentleman entered and came towards me.

"Indeed," I replied, "I'm afraid there was little brilliancy or originality in my arguments. I simply took a common sense view of the question, and wrote accordingly."

"Common sense! Exactly—that is the point on which we differ. It is an *un*-common sense that opens up to us the great truth of Pre-existence—all other truths, indeed—but of this it is the essential."

"You would imply that minds capable of believing the theory must be possessed of some great faculty which is denied to the ordinary thinker?" I questioned, half sarcastically.

"Exactly," he replied, leaning back in his chair, with a smile. "And you think I am unfair in having taken a position from which it is impossible to drive me, and yet on which I have (to your mind) no reasonable grounds for standing."

"I certainly think it a most unsatisfactory position," I said. "For myself, belief must be the result of reasoning. No advance in Metaphysics—or any branch of Science, can be made unless the results are deduced logically from facts."

"I agree with your last observation, most decidedly, but are you sure all men have the same facts to reason from? Every man is an unknown quantity to his fellows who cannot tell what knowledge he has. Well, I have promised to convince you and I shall do so. Does not an action, or a spoken sentence sometimes give you the impression that you have been in the same position, or spoken the same words, before?"

"It's not an uncommon occurrence," I replied. "Most people have experienced it. It is the partial remembrance of an action, revived by its association with a slight link connecting the past and the present. But it is a memory of this life; there is no need to go back farther than a few years—to childhood, at any rate—for its solution."

"No *need!* That is hardly logical."

He suddenly broke off and rose from the chair, throwing up his arms, his whole face changing from its calm, meditative expression to one of eagerness and expectancy. His eyes gleamed, every feature grew thinner and sharper. The man had changed utterly, and with that change I lost the feeling of almost reverence with which he had inspired me. In place of him whose words had nearly carried conviction with them, and who had spoken calmly and deliberately, as if with a certain knowledge, there stood the *seeker* after truth—the uncertain, conjecturing man, knowing himself in the darkness and hoping for the light.

But his emotion died away, and leaning one arm on the mantelpiece, and resting his head on his hand, he said suddenly: "You have no recollection of Aristotle?"

"Of Aristotle? Oh, yes, I am fairly intimate with his works," I replied, wondering at the question put in such a negative form.

"I am speaking of the man. The works he left are but ghosts of his lectures. Ah! you recollect nothing," he said, slowly shaking his head, "and yet you were with him, too. But you *shall* remember." And again his manner changed to eager nervousness, and he walked across the room and dragged back the heavy curtain with a clatter of rings on their brass pole.

The change alarmed me; there was something strange in his behaviour, and something stranger in his voice even than in his words. Simultaneously with his movement I had risen and advanced a few steps, but as he flung aside the curtain and turned and looked me in the face I shrank back involuntarily. All the serenity had vanished from his features, his eyes were opened wildly, and there was a glare in them that put me on my guard at once. His nostrils were dilated, his lips parted, and his whole body trembled with excitement. My heart stopped beating, and then gave a bound that sent the blood rushing to my head—*the man was mad!*

Past the curtain I saw, beneath a white covering, the outline of a couch, with something rising and spreading

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on each side from the head. There was nothing more in the apartment, and I knew the object was in some way connected with the madness of the man before me. Of all horrors the indefinite is the worst, and, as I stood there—my eyes wandering from the face of the doctor to the object beyond—I felt powerless to speak or move. The suddenness of the discovery I had made numbed me, and my heart beat thickly and uncertainly.

"Come," he said, and turning from me he moved towards the couch and placed his hand on the sheet to drag it off.

But his movement had broken the spell and brought back all my power of speech and thought.

"Pray don't trouble, Dr. Manners," I said as calmly as I could, "I will call and see you again. It's getting late and I really haven't time now."

To say they sounded forced and false would give little idea of the effect both my words and voice had on me. Had the situation been less horrible I should have laughed at the incongruity of my words and feelings.

But whatever of my true state of mind my voice expressed was unnoticed by the doctor. One word alone caught his ear.

"Time!" he exclaimed, dropping the cloth, and suddenly swinging round with a contemptuous gesture. "What is time to one who has lived in the past, has seen nations rise and fall, man advance and retreat in the march of civilisation and knowledge—and who, through all, has seen the same sun rise and set—birth and death ever recurring in an eternal round—the soul passing on, never dying, through its earthly habitations, age after age? What is time to one who knows that your centuries—aye, and ages—are to eternity far less than a second is to millions of your years?"

While he was speaking I had summed up the state of affairs rather more accurately than the first alarm had allowed. I was alone with this madman, and any attempt to leave the place would most likely lead to violence on his part.

The curtains before the door and windows effectually prevented my making a dash and escaping before he could reach me. While I was drawing them aside he would be upon me—and behind me! That was not to be thought of—far better meet him face to face, if there must be a struggle; and I imagined I could hold my own if his madness did not give him greater strength than I should gain from my despair.

But before all I must try to bring him to his senses—at least to calm him. His strange language, his wish to convince me of the truth of his ideas, his abrupt gestures might mean nothing after all, and my idea of a horrible experiment, in which I should play the victim, was only conjecture. And so, endeavouring to reassure myself, I replied to him:

"Certainly it may not affect you, sir, but we unfortunate individuals, who are obliged to work amongst men who have not your deep insight into all ages, must deal with time and live in accordance with custom. I regret leaving you, but I really must do so."

"Well, first let me explain to you my discovery, and then you shall go," he said reluctantly. "I had hoped—— But there!" and he waved his hand impatiently, and withdrew the white covering. "Look!"

Drawing a few steps nearer, I surveyed the now uncovered contrivance with interest, in spite of my desire to be far away from it and its designer.

I saw a long, leather-padded, sloping table, at its higher end about three feet from the ground. At the upper end of the couch two springs rose from beneath the sides, and, curving over till within a few inches from each other, terminated in small concave brass plates. Over the centre of the head, slightly above these plates, hung a broad semi-circle of steel, supported by another spring. From either side of the table a wooden arm protruded. Round each arm covered wire was twisted, showing, as the light fell on the ends, half-an inch of shining metal. Three great straps were fastened to the couch at intervals, evidently intended to buckle across the legs, waist, and arms of a person lying on it, and two steel clasps fixed midway along this hideous invention seemed placed for the purpose of effectually handcuffing the victim. Beneath the table the carpet had been cut away, and thick wires ran downwards, passing through holes in the floor.

Dragged back the heavy curtain.

I could hardly fail to recognise the fact that electricity was a prominent agent in this experiment, and though I knew nothing of its nature, I shuddered as I pictured myself bound and helpless, with the mad doctor perhaps slowly torturing my life away. But my mind had not conceived, even in its greatest fear, the horrible thing his next words suggested.

"I told you it was principally your method of argument prompted me to ask you to come here. It recalled memories of old days, and I wished your first knowledge should be of the days when you and I were together in Athens.

"Why need I explain the means by which I discovered where the secret chambers of the brain lie, in which the record of past lives is hidden? Or the reasoning which proves beyond doubt that it can be awakened now? We will pass over all that. Listen! You will lie upon this table—your head here, with these small brass plates clasping your temples. I shall then cut away part of your skull, lay bare a portion of your brain, and apply to it these electrodes. Then you will receive a series of sudden shocks——"

"Great Heavens, man!" I cried hotly, forgetting caution and everything in my indignation at such a fiendish proposal, "it's certain death. Mad as you are you cannot think me fool enough to agree to this. Let me pass!" for by this time he had come round between me and the door. "You shall keep me here no longer."

"Let you go," he repeated, "now everything is ready! Let you go—no!"

He sprang at me, taking me by surprise, and catching me round the waist, lifted me from my feet and staggered towards the table. I knew that, once stretched on it, the handcuffs would clasp my wrists, the strong belts encircle my body, and then no power on earth could save

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me. I gripped him by the throat, forcing his head back till he reeled and gasped for breath. He strove to throw me to the ground, but I only tightened my grasp—I had him with both hands now—and he struggled in vain.

Suddenly he let his hands drop, and I found myself on my feet again. Before I knew it he had drawn back his right arm and struck me in the face with his clenched fist, following it up by another blow from his left. But I was too near him for it to take full effect, and my raised arms in some measure warded it off and prevented him hitting surely. I forced him to his knees, his head hung back, and he ceased to struggle. I saw blood on his lips, and, fearing he was dying, let go my hold. But the blood came from the lip he had bitten through in his mad rage—not from his lungs—and for the rest, he was only shamming, for, the moment I released him, he caught me by the wrists and drew himself to his feet.

Then he was on me again, this time pinning my arms to my side. We fought in silence. I did not cry for help, all my energies were centred in this fight for life, and I thought of nothing but preventing the madman from dragging me to the table and throwing me upon it. He seemed made of iron, and as I grew weaker his strength increased. His arms crushed the breath from my body. I could not release mine, and was slowly pressed backward and backward till I felt the edge of the couch touch my legs. I kicked and bit like a wild beast in my despair, but gradually I was borne back—helpless upon the table.

In as few words as possible I told the whole story.

But one chance now remained. To imprison me beneath those cursed straps he must release an arm, if only for a moment. Could I at that moment make a last effort and throw him off? Oh, to get my hands again round that throat on which the marks of my fingers now showed so plainly! Then nothing but death should release him from my grasp—no crafty acting—no sudden strength should avail him. I would make sure of him then.

Presently I felt his left hand stealthily moving beneath me, while with his elbow he still pressed my arm down tightly. I knew the moment had arrived, and as he suddenly released my right arm and seized the strap, I twisted round and planted a blow full between his eyes. Then I had him by the throat again.

Down to the floor we fell, he undermost, and rolled over and over, both fighting for dear life now, for he knew he could expect no mercy.

But of a sudden I felt his hands unclasp from my wrists, and his body fall limp and lifeless. Half fearing another ruse, I threw him off me, and knelt over him, one hand on his throat still, though with relaxed grasp. With the other hand I tore away his clothing, and felt his heart. It had ceased to beat.

Breathless, sick, almost blind, I rose and staggered to the door, but it was locked (automatically I afterwards learned). I turned to the window, but before I could reach it the room spun round, blood rushed to my eyes, and hummed in my ears, and I fell.

* * * * * *

When I awoke I looked round. The door hung on one hinge, the curtain was torn down, and through the gap I saw the familiar uniform of the police. By my side sat a gentleman in evening dress, and standing a few paces away was a squarely built, bearded inspector. Whatever happened now I was safe from the torture the maniac had designed for me.

"All right now, sir?" queried the burly official, speaking to the man by my side, and nodding at me.

"Yes, I think so. How do you feel, sir? Rather light-headed? Ah, yes, but you'll soon be as right as possible. There's nothing radically wrong. A black eye, and a few scratches and bruises; that's all. Still, you'd better let him get away as soon as possible, inspector."

"Right you are, doctor. Now, sir, can you explain the meaning of this?" and he jerked his head in the direction of the curtained apartment, where the table and the dead body were still visible.

In as few words as possible I told the whole story, and when I had finished the inspector said:

"You've had a narrow escape, sir. Luckily the servant got alarmed at the noise and fetched us, although it would have been as well if she'd called us sooner. Dr. Manners was well known round here as the 'mad doctor,' but we've never had any trouble with him before. Well, you'll be wanted at the inquest, of course, but I don't think I need detain you now. I'll take your name and address though, and one of my men will see you home in a cab."

I walked with uncertain steps from the room on the arm of the medical man, and, when we were out of hearing of the inspector, I put the question I had been *thinking* all the time I had been telling the story to them:

"Doctor, was—did I kill him?"

"No," he replied reassuringly. "Had I not been able to tell our friend in there the same thing, you would hardly be going home now. It was a close thing, and after all the matter of a few minutes only, but he died from heart disease, brought on by violent exertion and excitement."

Walter Rothwell.

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CHAPTER XV.

In Clouds of Silence Folded Out of Sight.

While Eleanor is at Copthorne, Philip is staying in Trebovir Road with Mr. and Mrs. Lane.

"I cannot think why I have not heard from Eleanor," he says one morning to Erminie. "For three days not a word—no answer to my letters or the telegram."

"Really; it was a pity you were prevented running down that afternoon. I expect she was disappointed."

"I am not so sure about that," thinks Philip.

"It is just possible she may have written to Lyndhurst. Did she know you were staying on with us?"

"I told her so, but perhaps she forgot, or did not take it in. I shall go there to-morrow and see."

Philip is uneasy about Eleanor. Her silence hurts him, for he still loves her passionately, in spite of their quarrels and her deceptions. All that day he thinks constantly of his wife, picturing her image at every turn, wondering how she passes her quiet days in the old farmhouse, and whether she is happy at Copthorne. He has sent her some books and papers she asked for, but they have not been acknowledged.

He is not angry, but pained at her inconsideration, and the galling thought that he no longer holds even a corner in her heart is bitterest grief to him.

His friends notice his depression in the City, and remark about it. The hours are long, and the spring sunshine seems laughing at him. He pines for the country, the fresh green, the old love—Eleanor!

That evening the Lanes take him to the theatre. The play bores him to distraction, though they say that it is good. He remembers reading some excellent notices on it in the leading papers, and planning to take Eleanor the night after she returns. He is one of a gay, light-hearted party, and goes on with them to sup at the Savoy, feeling like a spectre at the feast. They sit at the same table where he once found his wife with that smiling hypocrite Mrs. Mounteagle, and the man he hates, loathes, fears.

These recollections render Philip but a poor companion.

Erminie, noticing his low spirits, planned the evening's entertainment to cheer him up.

She has a pretty little sister-in-law with her, who prattles merrily, and reminds Mr. Roche somewhat of Eleanor, in a tantalising manner, when she laughs and he catches her profile.

"I have never been to the celebrated Savoy before," she says. "Reggie declares it is a place where ladies go without their husbands when they want to be rakish and lively. It looks as if he were right, for I am certainly without my better half this evening. When I look at you and Nelson, and then think of Reggie and myself, I cannot imagine how it is all wives and husbands don't get on. I believe I have done a lot of harm since my wedding by advising everybody to marry, and throwing susceptible young people together in the most reckless manner."

"We have not given it a very long test," says Erminie, "but look at that startling beauty in yellow," changing the subject out of consideration for Philip.

"Oh! she is the leader of one of the fastest sets in town," Nelson vouchsafes, as Lady MacDonald, a mass of flashing diamonds and old gold brocade, enters into the restaurant.

The place sends Philip's flagging spirits down to zero, he is thankful to get home, and paces his room half that night thinking of Eleanor, and longing for the love of dear departed days.

"Perhaps when she comes back from Copthorne it will be different," he thinks. "I have been away too much in that miserable City, she has been dull, and thus fallen a prey to Mrs. Mounteagle's bad influence." He will give her more companions, keep his house full of guests, pleasant accommodating people who will not object to early breakfast, and dinner that invariably waits half-an-hour later than it should on account of his business.

He writes to Eleanor as the clock strikes two. His letter is full of promises for the future.

He paints a picture of delightful plans. They will have the house full until Easter, when he will take her abroad. She shall go wherever she pleases, and he will be her trusting, adoring slave. He will make it impossible for her not to love him.

For nearly an hour he pores over the sheet, telling Eleanor these good resolves.

"Dearest," he says in conclusion, "can't we begin our lives over again—love as we did in quiet Copthorne—before we drifted apart? I will try and be a better husband. Do come back to me soon, for I find I cannot get on without my little Eleanor. She is all the world to me."

Then he seals the envelope, and falls into a restless sleep, which is broken by haunting dreams of dimly suspected terrors.

Early in the morning Philip wakes, unrefreshed and heartsick. Still the question burns on his brain—Why has Eleanor not written?

He rises before the household is astir, and lets himself out into the mild air.

Hailing a hansom, he tells the man to drive him as quickly as possible to Richmond Terrace. Perhaps Erminie is right, and Eleanor has written to Lyndhurst after all.

Sarah starts as she sees Mr. Roche on the doorstep.

"Good-morning," he says, "are there any letters for me?"

He does not wait for the answer, but walks straight in, and takes up a pile of envelopes on the hall table.

A few circulars, a bill, and three letters addressed to Eleanor at Copthorne in his own handwriting, and forwarded back by Mrs. Grebby to Mrs. Roche at Lyndhurst.

He stares at them in mute amazement, as if in those white envelopes a horrible mystery lies unrolled.

He tears them slowly open one by one, reading what he knows so well already, the casual news, the fond farewells, penned only for Eleanor's eyes.

How is it she has never received them? How is it they have been sent back by Mrs. Grebby when Eleanor is *there*?

For the moment he is unnerved. Then pulls himself together, places the letters in his pocket, picks up his stick, and turns to go.

"Are you coming home to-day, sir?" asks Sarah.

"Coming home!" The words grate on him.

"No," he replies, "I am going to Mrs. Roche, at Copthorne."

Then he dashes out of the house, and reaches Trebovir Road just as Erminie and Nelson are at breakfast.

"We could not think what had become of you," cries Mrs. Lane, running out to meet him. "Why did you go out, and where have you been?"

Then she sees how pale he is, and the questions die on her lips.

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"Come in," she says gently. "I have got some hot coffee for you, and your favourite dish. What! you won't eat anything?"

"No thank you, dear, I haven't time. I only flew back to tell you I am off to Copthorne. I am a little anxious about Eleanor, not having written you know. She was rather seedy and done up before she left, and those old people are bad correspondents."

"You think she is ill?"

"I fear something is wrong."

"But you must have something before you go, or you will be quite faint."

Philip is not in the mood to argue, he answers her abruptly, almost rudely, and guessing that something is wrong, she lets him go, watching him drive away with sorrowful compassionate eyes.

"I am afraid poor Phil is in some trouble again," she says to Nelson, mechanically cracking the shell of her boiled eggs. "He has gone."

"What?"

"Yes," shaking her head solemnly, "and without any breakfast."

"But you should not let him."

"I could not help it. He is going to see Eleanor."

"Has she been leading the poor fellow another dance? What a curse that woman is!"

"Don't talk like that! I am very fond of Eleanor, with all her faults—almost as fond as of Phil, and you know how I love him. I am not sure what it is about her, but you can't bring yourself not to care for her. It's that pretty little confiding way, I think, and those lovely wistful eyes. She is so easily led and swayed. It is a great pity."

"She will come to a bad end, depend upon it," replies Nelson, congratulating himself on the good woman who crowns his home.

Philip takes the morning train to Copthorne. Business goes to the wind. He thinks only of his wife, and the letters that have come back so strangely into his keeping.

The journey seems interminable. He flings a pile of papers unread on the opposite seat, puts a cigar between his teeth, and forgets to light it, closes his tired eyes, which only quickens and excites his overwrought imagination, till finally the train steams into the drowsy little station of Copthorne.

Philip walks at the fastest possible speed across the meadows. There is the gate on which Eleanor perched herself the night before their wedding, declaring she *would* dangle her feet whether she was to be Mrs. Roche or not.

Then the green lane, where she asked him to wait till the following spring. He remembers her words distinctly. She had said them so lightly in reference to their union: "When the birds begin to sing, then I will marry you, Philip."

But he had proved himself the stronger, and carried off his prize that same month.

Now the spring is here. The birds are singing—mocking, jeering. The old farmhouse is in sight—he pauses.

Oh, what a moment of suspense.

No Eleanor comes across the garden to greet him. It all looks dead—still.

He can hear Rover's feeble bark—the sound savours of decay.

Then Philip walks forward, and his shadow falls across the porch. The bell peals.

Mrs. Grebby starts at the ring, and brushes past the little farmhouse servant hurrying to the door.

"Why, it's never Mr. Roche!" she exclaims.

"Yes," he replies; "I have come for Eleanor. Where is she?"

Mrs. Grebby sinks on to the seat in the porch, and stares at him open-mouthed.

"What do yer mean?" she gasps at last. "There ain't no harm come to my dearie!"

She wrings her hands despairingly.

"Has Eleanor left you?" he asks in a voice so strangely unfamiliar that he hardly knows it for his own.

"Three days ago. She went 'ome, to be sure, as bright and as bonny as could be, looking that pretty, I says to my old man, 'it's well she's not travellin' alone.'"

"Who was with her?" questions Philip intently, mastering his intense emotion.

"A friend what came the day you telegraphed. He said 'e'd see 'er back safe and sound. I packed 'er clothes with my own hands, I did, she never touched a thing, and we drove them both behind Black Bess to the station, with Rover following at the wheel."

A low hiss breaks from Philip's lips.

"And this man," he asks fiercely, impatiently, biting his lips. "What was he like?"

"Oh! 'e was a beautiful gentleman, so well dressed and handsome, Mr., let me see, Mr. Quinton I think she called him."

Philip has heard enough, he turns away with a groan.

Mrs. Grebby watches the dark despair creep over his features in blank amazement.

"What does it mean?" she asks, detaining him with a trembling hand.

"It means," replies Philip in a choking voice, "that Eleanor has left me."

A cry escapes Mrs. Grebby, she buries her face in her apron, rocking herself to and fro, moaning pitifully.

"We, as always kep' ourselves respectable, and never knew what it was to blush for any of our stock, and she 'as lifted the family, and married a good, real gentleman like yourself, sir, to bring disgrace and ruin on 'er 'appy 'ome. Oh! my, oh! my, the poor misguided lass!"

Philip, in his own agony, finds himself comforting the weeping woman, and praying her to bear up. Then, as she dries her streaming eyes, clasping his hand with a hoarse "God bless you, Mr. Roche," he hastens away with bent head and throbbing brow back over the green grass.

No curse rises to his silent lips; he is as one who has just heard of the sudden death of his dearest upon earth. Everything seems slipping from him. There is a long stretch of blank life before his bloodshot eyes.

He waits in a state of nervous prostration on a wooden bench at Copthorne Station till the return train to town appears.

Then he staggers forward into the first empty carriage, buries his face on the cushions, and sobs.

His strong frame shakes like a reed with the violence of his grief. He is weak, too, from having fasted since the previous night, and does not attempt to control his sorrow.

The maddening thought of Eleanor and Quinton together adds gall and wormwood to the desolation in the deserted husband's heart.

"With Quinton!" He repeats the words, grinding his teeth. Quinton, the low scoundrel, the fast, fascinating man of bad reputation, the villain who has betrayed his wife, his angel, and dragged her to the lowest depths of degradation! She is beyond Philip's help now, and he knows it—beyond redemption!

The Rubicon has been crossed. Eleanor is among the lost—on the other side!

Erminie is sitting under the pale light of a yellow lamp, deep in a novel.

The heroine is wavering on the verge of an irredeemable error, and Erminie's kind heart is thoroughly in the book. She is a sympathetic reader, and her eyes moisten as they scan the pages.

She is guilty of serious skipping, and as steps are heard in the hall below, glances at the finish.

A sigh of relief escapes her.

"Oh, I am glad she didn't! I am glad she is saved!" exclaims Mrs. Lane involuntarily, rising, as she thinks, to meet Nelson, since this is his hour to return.

Instead, Philip stands before her, white as a corpse. His haggard features are accentuated by the mellow lamp light, his figure sways, tottering till he steadies himself by grasping the back of a chair.

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He has not tasted food that day, and she fancies he looks shrunken, marvelling at his altered appearance.

She dares not ask him what has happened, but just gazes with wondering sympathy into his miserable eyes.

"It has come," he gasps, passing one hand over his brow.

"What?" murmurs Erminie, under her breath.

"Eleanor and Quinton—they have gone together."

His voice vibrates through the room. A gasp of horror escapes Mrs. Lane. She staggers back.

"What shall you do?" she asks.

"What will I do?" echoes Philip, his eyes flashing, and the colour rushing back in a flood to his ashen cheeks. "Find her—track her to the end of the earth. Everything in life has closed to me this day. I shall only exist for one motive—one unswerving aim. She thinks she has escaped me, but the world is small, and while Eleanor and I are both in the same hemisphere——"

He pauses, for the room swims round.

A look that Erminie can never forget crosses his face—a look of sublime love, checked by an expression of devilish rage and hatred. The two seem battling a moment for pre-eminence.

Then he draws himself up to his full height, as if fighting for breath, and falls heavily upon the floor at Erminie's feet. Nelson's voice is heard calling her without.

She rushes to the door with a wild cry:

"Help—help! Philip is DEAD!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Ah, for some retreat,
Deep in yonder shining Orient.—TENNYSON.

"HAVE you ever heard anything more of that poor Mr. Roche, whose wife deserted him?" asks Erminie's sister-in-law.

"No," replies Mrs. Lane sadly. "We had one awful night when he came and told us the news, and fainted. I am so weak-minded, I thought he was dead immediately, and shrieked and tore my hair, and made quite a scene. I always jump at conclusions, it is so stupid of me. Nelson had a bad time of it that night. We sent for a doctor, but it was ages before we got him round, and then he seemed so strange and reticent that it frightened me still more. I thought he would lose his reason, he had just that look on his face. The following day he left us without a word. He just held both my hands very tightly, and said thank you with his eyes. Of course I made a fool of myself, and kissed him and cried over him like a child, which only made matters worse. I asked him what he intended doing, and he gasped 'Eleanor' under his breath, and rushed out of the house. We have never seen him since."

Philip stands before her.

"How strange. Then he has entirely vanished out of your lives? I thought he seemed strangely depressed at the theatre, the evening we went to the Savoy."

"Ah! that was the night before."

"Yes, he disappointed me. I had heard so much of your charming cousin, but I suppose the poor fellow had some inkling of it then."

"I never expect to see him again. He was a very sensitive man, and the curious or condoling looks of acquaintances would have driven him mad. Nelson says he has left England, yet no one knows where he has gone. The nice home on Richmond Terrace is broken up, and I have practically lost a brother. It was a strange ending to his married career."

"That is what comes of marrying beneath you. These people with low minds——"

Erminie stops her sister-in-law with a deprecating gesture. She is staunch to Philip, and knows how it would pain him to hear these words.

"I was fond of her," she says simply. "Let us talk of something else."

* * *

"I wish we could go up to the source of the Irrawaddy River, where no white man has ever been," says Eleanor, laying her hand confidingly in Carol's. "I should not be afraid with you, dear—such a traveller, and knowing the country so well. How many years is it since you were last in India?"

"Over seven. How did I drag through them without you?" he replies tenderly.

"We had a glorious voyage, didn't we? and everybody was so nice to us. I remember, Carol, how frightened I felt when first you suggested this long journey, and promised to take me north of Burmah to this strange, uncivilised village, where I should have to eat nothing but rice, or shoot my own game. Of course you had been here before, and though it is so wild and out of the way, there are still some white people to remind us we are not all savages."

"My dear, you must not call them 'savages,'" he says smiling. "They are really very nice, though a trifle odd and original, but that is what you like, I believe."

"Oh! yes. I am quite in love with my black servants. I think they are ever so much more picturesque and pleasant than my Richmond acquaintances. They look on me as a white angel, which no one would have done at home," with a smile at her quiet humour.

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Eleanor's feelings by now are blunted to a certain extent, and she frequently jests on the wholesome horror with

Falls heavily on the floor at Erminie's feet.

which her English friends must now regard "that reckless Mrs. Roche!"

Yet there are times when the thought of her sin rises like a dark thundercloud over the sunshine of this life of love.

She is standing in the low verandah of her bamboo house, looking out over a network of gorges, rifts, and ravines, precipices in peaks, with villages crowning each crest. The houses are thatched with long grass, which grows over the hills, while below in the valley the rice is cultivated in terraces. The villages are stockaded with bamboo, and the water runs through them in troughs of split bamboo.

"The people are certainly very dirty," says Eleanor, watching an old woman with large amber earrings, pounding rice, and talking to a dusky man in a blue turban.

"Yes. They wear their clothes till they fall off, and never wash except when it rains. That man below is a noted warrior in these parts."

"How do you know?"

"You see the sword slung over his shoulder, with a bamboo hoop? Well, the tiger's hoop is a sign of distinction."

"I wish the old woman would stop pounding. She makes my back ache to look at her. She has been making linen on a loom all day, and must be dreadfully tired."

"Did you notice the bell on it?"

"Yes. What was that for?"

"So that her lord and master may know when she stops working."

"There was a funeral to-day," says Eleanor; "the guns have been going since morning in the jungle, to keep the spirits off. What a misery it must be to believe in 'Nâts.'* That old woman there gave me a charm. I am always to wear it to keep the devils off. Do you think it will, Carol?" with a low laugh. "Or am I theirs already?"

"Don't, Eleanor," he cries, drawing her to him. "I cannot bear to hear you say such things."

She wriggles herself free, determined to tease him.

"But there are heaps of devils about," she declares, shaking her head, "or else why do they put up arches especially to keep them off—propitiate them, and prevent their entrance into the village? They have little bamboo huts like dolls' houses, and place food inside, that the devils may lodge and eat. It seems that the corpse to-day had a good time of it. They gave him a month's food, new gong and gun, a complete set of new clothes, and two or three gourds of Zoo—they are always drunk with that stuff. It is an awfully strong drink, though made from rice, which sounds innocent, doesn't it? Rice always reminds me of my bib and tucker days."

"It is rather like English cider, with the strength of whisky. But what a lot of information you pick up, little woman, while I am out shooting!"

"It terrifies me when you are away all day," she declares. "Then I feel lonely—deserted—afraid. Tigers and bears are such alarming things to picture you chasing, though you are accompanied by a troop of negroes."

Eleanor leans back in a low chair, gazing wistfully across the wild country. She can see the course of the Irrawaddy river, with its numerous rapids and picturesque cascades. It seems only the other day that she and Carol steamed up it, past Mandalay, Bhanio, and Myitkyina. She wishes they could travel on overland through the jade, amber, and ruby mines, but Carol fears for her, and prefers to stay in these more quasi-civilised regions.

A group of women and girls strikes her eye, carrying loads supported by a strap encircling their foreheads, after the curious fashion of Dundee fisherwomen.

The unmarried girls wear square-cut fringes and their hair hanging loosely at the sides to the shoulders, while the married women have it done up decorously on the head.

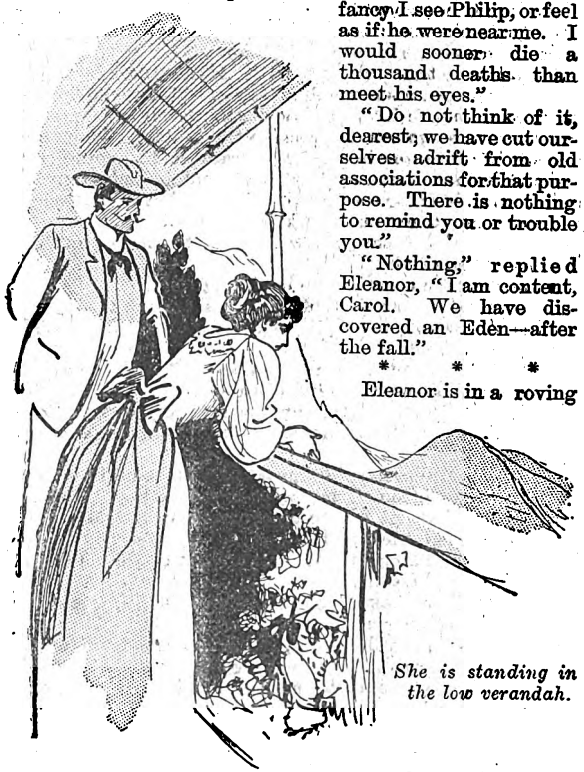
"I am glad I have not to carry loads like those poor creatures," says Eleanor softly, "yet perhaps an external load is better than an internal one. Sometimes Carol I remember that I once had a conscience. It just stirs and half wakes when I am quite alone. Often in the darkness I fancy I see Philip, or feel as if he were near me. I would sooner die a thousand deaths than meet his eyes."

"Do not think of it, dearest; we have cut ourselves adrift from old associations for that purpose. There is nothing to remind you or trouble you."

"Nothing," replied Eleanor, "I am content, Carol. We have discovered an Eden—after the fall."

* * *

Eleanor is in a roving



She is standing in the low verandah.

mood, and while Carol is engaged in the mild sport of pheasant shooting for a change, she wanders alone into the jungle to watch the children playing with large beans like marbles. Though she cannot understand what they say, she grasps the method of the game, watching it

*Spirits.

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with amused interest. They are such queer little dusky creatures.

One boy among them especially attracts her attention. His face is strangely European, and his features noticeably different to those of his comrades. Yet his skin is dark and swarthy, there can be no mistaking the black blood in his veins.

Now and again Eleanor fancies she catches an English exclamation from his lips. She wishes she could join the children in their gambols, as in her girlhood at Copthorne. But they eye her suspiciously and sidle away when she approaches.

She wanders back disconsolately, wishing she knew more of the boy with the European face.

That very day her wish is satisfied. It is late in the afternoon, and Carol is still out. She is too blinded by love to resent his selfishness in leaving her so much alone, and wanders down to the river, singing from sheer lightness of heart.

She sees as she saunters along a trap set for a deer, and gives it a wide berth as she passes.

It consists of a noose fastened to the top of a pliant tree, which is bent down and pegged across a path leading down to the water. Thus it serves to entrap prey on the way to drink.

She has scarcely gone a hundred yards when a shriek rends the air, and turning simultaneously Eleanor sees a small boy trip over the noose, which released from the peg, flies back with the full force of the tree, carrying him into the air with it.

She rushes up terror-stricken at the horrible sight. The screaming child is suspended far above her head, the cruel thongs cutting deeply into his flesh.

The sight puts energy and cat-like agility into her limbs. She climbs the tree with all the daring of her orchard days, tearing great rents in her dress, spurred on by the cries of the helpless victim. She creeps on hands and knees along the willowy bow, upon which he hangs, till her weight combined with his, brings the inevitable result. A creak, a crash, and the two fall together to the ground. Unharmed herself save for a few bruises and scratches, Eleanor releases the unfortunate child, raising his bleeding body tenderly in her arms, binding up the wounds with her handkerchief, and soothing his groans with kisses.

"Oh! dear," she says, "I wish I knew where you lived, you poor little darling."

To her intense surprise the boy replies:

"Up there," pointing feebly with his injured arm.

Then she sees for the first time he is the child with the European features.

"Will it hurt you if I carry you back?" asks Eleanor.

"Best try," answers the boy abruptly.

He is heavy for his age, but she staggers forward manfully, while the little aching head drops confidingly on her shoulder.

"You're awful pretty," he gasps at last, "and I am dropping no end of blood off my arm on your bodice. Oh! how my leg hurts. Guess I have broken it clean in two."

At every step Eleanor fears she must give in, the perspiration is standing out on her forehead, while her own wounds smart and ache.

"I am afraid I shake you terribly up this hill, would you like me to rest a moment?"

Eleanor hopes he will say yes, for her strength is giving out.

"Sit on that stone, I'm just dying," moans the little lad.

Eleanor eagerly assents, and moves him into a more comfortable position.

"My mother is white like you," he says at last, raising his head.

"Is she dear? Are you better? Shall we go on?"

"Yes, please. We may meet father, he is ever so big and dark. I shall be big and dark too, all the good men are black."

"And the good women?" asks Eleanor, smiling in spite of her load.

"Oh! white of course, white all over like you and mother, hands, feet, everything."

Eleanor staggers on breathlessly up the hill, the boy seems to grow heavier at every step. She is nearly exhausted. He is like the weight of her sin, which increases with time.

Once or twice she stumbles, the boy clutches her round the neck, fearing she will fall upon him, and his hands half choke her. She gasps for breath.

"Is it much further?" she pants, turning sick and dizzy with the climb.

"No, there is my house, that hut ahead, see."

It has come in sight not a moment too soon, for Eleanor's arms are cramped and paralysed by supporting his body, her cheek pale with the heat, her heart fluttering spasmodically.

Only a few steps more, and she will have reached the haven of refuge. How foolish it would be to fail now.

Through sheer force of will she reaches the hut, and as the boy cries "Mother! mother!" she sinks exhausted in the entrance, still holding her suffering burden in her arms.

A woman rushes out, and takes her bleeding son from the stranger's embrace.

"He has been hurt," explains Eleanor faintly. "I carried him up the hill."

"Oh, you good soul!" cries the grateful mother, feeling her son's arms and legs; "and you're just as done up as can be. Come in, you poor young thing, and I'll give you a drink of Zoo to pull you round."

"No, thank you, I don't want anything. I am better now; but let me help you with the boy. We had better get his things off, and wash the wounds."

Together the two women tend the child. His leg is strained, not broken, and they put him to bed and watch him till he falls into a restless sleep.

Then their eyes meet, and the mother holds out her hand to Eleanor.

"God bless you!" she says; "if anything had happened to Tombo we should have broken our hearts. He is our only child."

Eleanor has recounted the history of the accident, leaving her share in the background, and making as light of it as possible.

She thinks as she looks at the white woman, with her fair hair and sandy eyelashes, that something in the face brings an indistinct memory to her mind.

She glances curiously round the hut, adorned by the heads of animals.

"I must go," she says; "it is getting late."

"The boy is sleeping. I will walk home with you."

"No, stay by him. I shall be all right alone."

"They have shot a tiger, and will all be drunk in the village for a week. You are different to me. I must come."

"Thank you," says Eleanor. "I shall enjoy your companionship. May I ask your name?"

"Elizabeth Kachin. And yours?"

"Eleanor—Eleanor Quinton."

Mrs. Roche's eyes droop as she turns them away from the sleeping face of that innocent child.

(*To be continued.*)

A New Serial by the author of the above delightful story commences in HOME NOTES next week.

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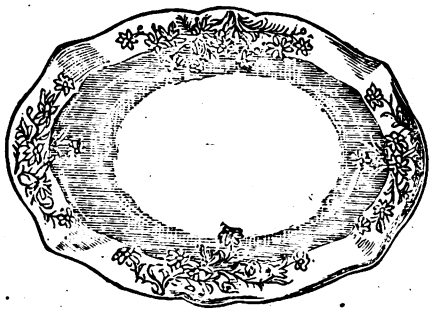

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NEW SERIAL JUST STARTED.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 378. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 28TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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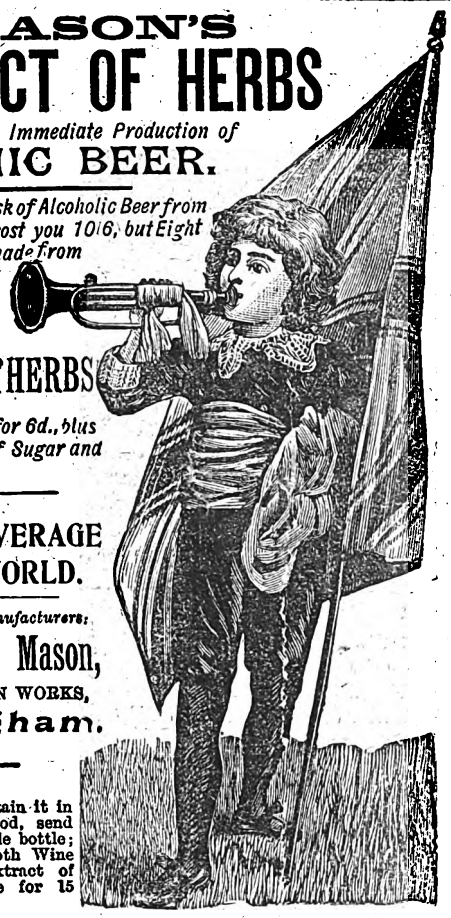

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No. 13

Mar. 28, 1896.

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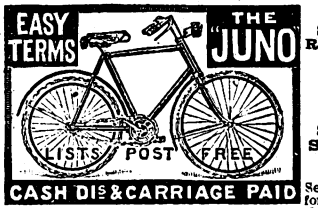

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Prevents Decay. Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented. Neuralgic Headache and all Nerve Pains Removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.

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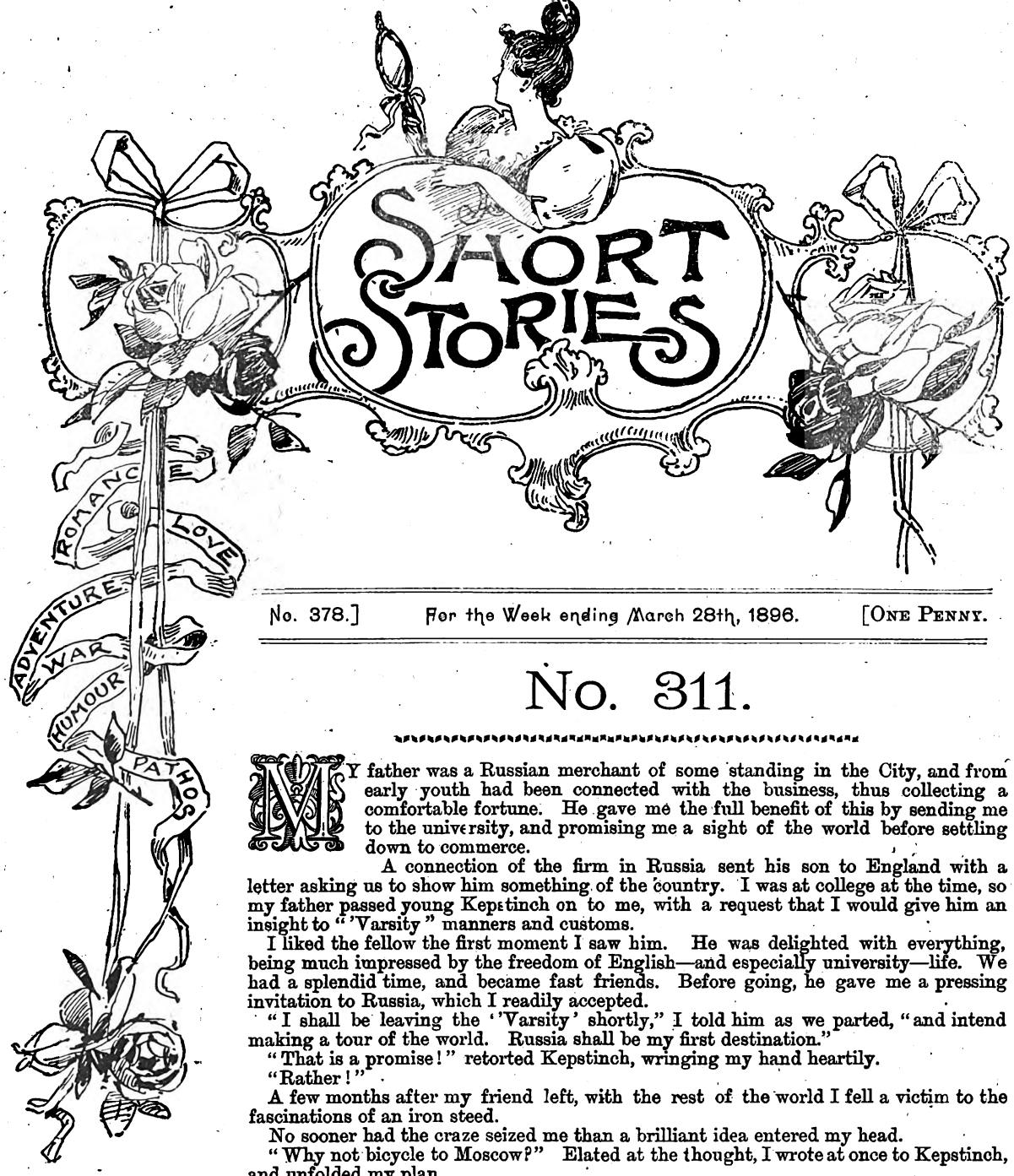

No. 378.] For the Week ending March 28th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

No. 311.

MY father was a Russian merchant of some standing in the City, and from early youth had been connected with the business, thus collecting a comfortable fortune. He gave me the full benefit of this by sending me to the university, and promising me a sight of the world before settling down to commerce.

A connection of the firm in Russia sent his son to England with a letter asking us to show him something of the country. I was at college at the time, so my father passed young Kepstinch on to me, with a request that I would give him an insight to "'Varsity" manners and customs.

I liked the fellow the first moment I saw him. He was delighted with everything, being much impressed by the freedom of English—and especially university—life. We had a splendid time, and became fast friends. Before going, he gave me a pressing invitation to Russia, which I readily accepted.

"I shall be leaving the 'Varsity' shortly," I told him as we parted, "and intend making a tour of the world. Russia shall be my first destination."

"That is a promise!" retorted Kepstinch, wringing my hand heartily.

"Rather!"

A few months after my friend left, with the rest of the world I fell a victim to the fascinations of an iron steed.

No sooner had the craze seized me than a brilliant idea entered my head.

"Why not bicycle to Moscow?" Elated at the thought, I wrote at once to Kepstinch, and unfolded my plan.

He replied that there were difficulties enough for a foreigner to get about Russia in the most approved style, and strongly advised me to stick to the railway.

I persisted, however, and Kepstinch, finding I was not to be persuaded out of it, arranged to procure me an exceptionally strong official pass, which would probably see me through any difficulties I might meet with.

I, like many of my fellow-countrymen, became far more enamoured of the idea when Kepstinch threw over it a slight halo of danger. He sent me a map of the roads, pointing out different places I could stop at, some of which were necessarily rather a long day's journey apart.

"Send me," he wrote, "the best photograph you have of yourself. I inclose a letter from an official which you must present at the frontier, where you will find yourself a person of some importance. They will have you examined by some magnificent myrmidons of the law, and identify you by the photograph, which will then be returned with several hieroglyphics on the back. Preserve this as your life, for wherever you go, you will find it a

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ready passport. It will come from a friend of mine who is head of the Secret Police."

I smiled as I read this epistle, glad at having determined to go by train to the Russian frontier, the quicker to enter upon the exciting part of my journey.

"No fun," I said, "cutting through Belgium and Germany; might as well be touring round Hyde Park for a month!"

So I went off with a light heart, having no fear for anything but the possible puncturing of my bicycle tyres.

At the Russian frontier I became veritably a notable person.

On producing my letter I was selected from the crowd of ordinary travellers, and marched off with a good deal of ceremony into a private room of the police.

Here they treated me with the greatest courtesy, and my identity being established, I was handed my own photograph, with sundry devices on the back.

The Chief of the Police, who spoke French, gave me every information and much advice.

I listened politely while he told me where to apply in case of trouble. I anticipated no evils beyond having to sleep under a hedge should my machine break down on one of the long stages.

He cautioned me to prepare for this contingency as well as my limited capacity would allow, and especially to take a good big flask of brandy.

After a night's rest, and having seen my luggage off to Moscow, I started on my way.

The country folk amused me; I was a source of great excitement to them. Some showed immense astonishment at my wheel, while others greeted me with what I instinctively felt to be ribald jests, and unmistakable hilarity.

My nights lodging was sometimes comfortable, more often not, but always interesting.

My tyres behaved bravely, so that the only anxiety gradually calmed and vanished, since the roads were even and the stones round.

On the fifth day I had to face a journey of eighty miles with apparently no inhabitants.

I supplied myself with as much food and drink as my machine would carry, taking the drink neat, and trusting for water to dilute it. So I rode off gaily, whistling one of the old college songs, and enjoying the wild, bleak scenery around.

The roads were fairly good, save for some white spa scattered about with dangerously sharp edges. They were, however, easily seen and avoided, until a spin down a delicious incline brought my stalwart tyre in direct contact with a sharp pointed edge of an embedded rock. Then, alas, were my worst fears realised. The tyre was not only punctured, but literally cut in half, beyond all amateur repairing.

I have been told I am level tempered, so I felt glad there was only the rock and the torn tyre to hear the hasty language that escaped my lips.

Having told these silent objects exactly what I thought of them, with my hands thrust in my pockets, and my forehead wrinkled into frowns, it struck me to look at my register. A groan greeted the intelligence: "Forty miles traversed. Forty more not only to walk, but to walk and push."

However, there was no help for it, and being about midday there was the chance I might get to a bed by midnight. I refreshed the inner man, lit a pipe, and started on my trudge.

Oh, how long the road seemed! What endless hours! What monotony and fatigue!

Ten o'clock found me enveloped in darkness, and according to my distance register, still eight miles from my destination.

A heavy sensation of intense weariness crept over me, taking the form of almost insupportable sleepiness.

I paused, my lamp burning brightly gave me a good view of my road for a few yards ahead.

If only I could find some sheltered spot in which to lie down and rest, but all was bare and bleak. I pulled myself together, and leaning heavily on my machine, dragged my aching feet along. A turning from the road caught my eye. Would that lead to some refuge? I peered through the gloom hopefully, and discovered by the aid of my lamp an uninhabited and dilapidated building. It might once have been a chapel, I could not tell, and cared less, the sight of any port in a storm is welcome. I tried the door, it opened on its rusty hinges. Nothing but bare walls greeted me, and empty window frames.

I crossed the floor to a doorway leading to a small inner room.

"This will do," I said, wheeling my wounded cycle through the doorless portal, round the corner of which I found myself slightly protected from draughts.

Congratulating myself on the discovery of even this lodging, I undid my light luggage, arranged a pillow, took a pull at my flask, extinguished the lamp, and threw myself down in a state of utter exhaustion.

In a few moments my troubles fled, and I sank into a deep dreamless sleep.

It seemed as if I had hardly closed my eyes, though it was probably many hours, when a dazzling light shone in my face, and I awoke with a start to find myself surrounded by about dozen men.

I sprang to my feet, but was instantly seized on either side. I stared at them bewildered, then pointed to my wrecked bicycle, hoping that would explain my peaceable presence there.

My gestures however had not the desired effect, and finding myself still in the grip of these burly strangers, I was marched into the next room.

The utmost excitement appeared to prevail, which I was utterly at a loss to comprehend. Two or three men quickly left the building with an evident purpose, while the others whispered among themselves, watching me as they did so with sharp glittering eyes. One of the band, a tall, handsome fellow, with thick eyebrows and broad forehead addressed me in an unknown tongue.

I shook my head vacantly, and replied: "I don't understand!"

"English," he said turning to his companions.

A look of satisfaction and relief passed round.

"*Vous parlez Français!*" suggested my spokesman.

I replied in the same tongue that I did.

"Why are you here?"

The question was asked in a solemn, sepulchral voice that re-echoed through the gloomy building.

I looked at the great strong fellow and thought what a warrior he would make.

My explanation was easily made. I detailed my adventure word for word, and apologised for sheltering in what was evidently their domain.

"You have heard what passed at our meeting?"

Their meeting! A vague suspicion crept into my heart. The mystery was clearing.

"Not one syllable," I replied quickly in my most convincing tones, and looking the spokesman straight in the eyes.

"How can we be sure of this," he said, half speaking to himself.

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I glanced towards the door, as the other men returned. They had evidently been outside to see if I had any accomplices, and appeared to give satisfactory assurances.

The tall man continued in his low, bass voice.

"Had you been of any other nationality," he said, "we should have been obliged to pass sentence of instant death upon you, fearing you might have heard what took place at our meeting here to-night. As it is, our society incurs great risk in letting you go free. We feel, however, that no one of your countrymen would debase himself by spying into matters which are purely Russian. Show us your papers to prove what you say, and we will leave you after receiving your oath that you heard nothing."

I brightened at the thought of the talisman which I held safely in my pocket, and blessed Kepstinch for his forethought. I raised my hand to draw it forth, but was again seized, while they politely but firmly insisted upon emptying my pockets themselves.

"They are afraid I may be carrying a revolver," I thought, confidently awaiting their production of the magic photograph, which would make them receive me as a brother, with open arms.

My counterfeit presentment was taken out and compared with the original. The likeness was unmistakable, and nothing of an incriminating character was found.

"But where is your passport?" asked the spokesman.

Before I could reply a cry came from a burly, long-haired man who was examining my photograph. The loosened grasps on my arms tightened, excited faces crowded round my picture, contorted with sudden hatred, while groans of disapproval broke from their lips. Something evidently was very wrong.

The speaker approached, his mighty form drawn up to its full height, his breast swelling, and his voice quivering with rage.

Three words came in the sudden hush, and re-echoed round the bare walls with hideous meaning and intensity:

"Prepare for death!"

I started back, chilled to the bone, amazed, incredulous.

For the moment surprise overcame my fear, and I burst out with: "What the dickens is the matter?" in pure Saxon.

One of the number stepped forward, and in poor, but intelligible English informed me that the signs on the back of my photograph showed me to be an emissary of the most secret and dreaded police, whose rule their society was formed to crush.

In fact, to my horror and consternation, I found myself stamped in an incontrovertible manner as in close alliance with the deadly enemies of these men. If I had been awake, as they half imagined, I should be possessed of some vital secrets of the most advanced Nihilist society.

In our darkest hours vivid and peculiar thoughts burn themselves on the brain. My home with its peaceful and well loved circle flashed quickly across my memory, I felt my mother's farewell kiss linger tenderly upon my lips, while I grasped again my father's hand. They were like visions from another world, immeasurable distance stretched between us, the barking of the old dog as he fawned about my knee grew fainter and fainter, there was the scream of an engine, the rush of a train. One desire came upon me with intense longing. "Oh! that I were at Charing Cross station on my way home."

Then the sensation of powerful pulsating life in my veins, compared in that dread moment with the dust of death, the horror of annihilation!

A fight for freedom was out of the question, though I pulled myself together for one great effort when the time came.

At all events I determined to die resisting.

The men were talking eagerly among themselves, and I was quick to notice that the one who spoke some English seemed the most irate against me.

He was evidently taking the lead in the matter of my execution, for which palpable preparation was being made.

A numb, paralysing cold seemed clutching at my heart with iron fingers, followed by deadly sickness, as I watched him produce a gleaming dagger, vieing with his *confrères* for the honour of using it murderously.

He approached me with queer dilating eyes, informing me I should have ten minutes to make my peace with God.

I returned his look with loathing, regarding in horror and disgust the miserable wretch who had so evidently demanded and secured the office of my butcher. I shuddered at the bloodthirsty tendency of this foul fiend!

What was then my amazement on hearing him half whisper in English by my ear:

"Escape is impossible except through me. Do exactly what I tell you without fear. Trust in my wits; it is your only chance!"

With these words he passed into the room adjoining, while hope sprang swiftly to my breast. I asked myself a series of bewildering questions, but answered none.

Could this man indeed have good intentions, and if so—how was it possible for him to carry them out? Perhaps he was only making it easier for me to die, knowing that an Englishman would have a struggle for his life in the face of all odds.

He returned from the room after what seemed an interminable age. I scanned his features eagerly, anxious to read the truth in his expression. What strange change had come over the man? He looked pale, weak, ill. I fancied his movements were laboured; occasionally he winced as if in pain.

With the fatal dagger in his hand he addressed his friends in Russian. I did not know what he said, but could see they all assented. Then turning to me he spoke again in English, which was certainly quite unintelligible to the others:

"I am supposed," he began, "to be telling you to prepare for death. When I raise my voice, show signs of emotion. The men will release you at my command. As I stab you, fall forward on your face, and do not stir beyond a shudder."

My eyes lit up with sudden hope.

"Don't look like that!" he exclaimed, and as he spoke my expression relaxed to one of feigned terror and abject despair.

"Be careful," he continued, "when carried out to show no sign, no movement. You will be buried, but rely on me to find means for preserving your life."

This speech was delivered with great deflection of voice for the benefit of those assembled. Then he turned and gave some orders in Russian, whereupon several men went out.

A conflicting multitude of fears and hopes swayed my mind; one moment I felt almost reassured, the next, knowing what difficulties and dangers must arise, my heart sank afresh.

Lurking doubts as to my champion made themselves felt, while I scanned the company curiously.

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What effect would the death of a fellow-creature have upon them? Could they witness it utterly unmoved?

Some turned pale, while their eyes shifted uneasily. One I noticed edged to the back, that he might look away without creating observation; others pushed forward gloatingly, a look of eager, almost hungry expectation on their faces, while their mouths gaped, and their bare red necks extended.

I could not analyse my own sensations, it all seemed like a ghastly nightmare, and I wondered if these blood-thirsty ruffians would fade before my eyes. Then tramping of feet outside, and the men returned, evidently having worked hard, for their sleeves were rolled up, their shirts open at the throat, and their boots clogged with moist earth.

I gathered from their appearance, they had been digging my grave.

I felt the cold beads of perspiration break out on my forehead, as I gazed at their soiled hands.

I believed my time had come!

My new-found friend advanced, and spoke again in measured tones:

"Are you nerved for what you have to go through?" he asked.

I bowed assent.

"I shall order the men to leave you, and trust to you to stand quiet and firm, apparently facing death without flinching. Any movement on your part may prove fatal."

A word from him in Russian, and I was free. Involuntarily I pulled myself together as if for a general scrimmage, but a moment's consideration, and I determined to place myself in the hands of this man, come what might.

Yet still the haunting thought returned. He might simply be acting a part to make my slaughter more easy.

My executioner approached, dagger in hand, and some of the strongest and fiercest men shrank back, showing some slight signs of emotion.

"I am going to feel under your shirt, to see, as they think, that there is nothing in the way of your heart," said my would-be saviour, "but in reality I shall place something to protect you."

I felt it touch my breast as he spoke, and drew myself up to tighten my clothes over whatever he had placed upon my heart.

My apparent bravery had a visible effect upon the audience. They muttered a smothered ejaculation.

"They are in a hurry," said the man with the dagger, "they could stand your shrieks, but are touched by your fortitude. Are you ready?"

My throat became dry and parched, a crimson mist rose before my eyes, my pulses quickened painfully. It was with difficulty I gasped the fatal word:

"Yes!"

A second that seemed like an hour—and the blow came! My head whirled, and a cry broke from my lips, just one gasp of mental agony, while a prick— a distinct prick warned me it was time to fall. One shudder—and I lay prostrate on the ground, uncertain still of my fate. Was I dead? No! my heart beat still, rapidly but surely. What was that red stream oozing from me on the floor? Blood! unmistakable blood, yet not from *my* veins. I felt no pain, no weakness. My supposed murderer bent down, and no doubt assured the others that I was dead, for the majority left the place hurriedly. I could hear them tramping away.

Quickly my friend's arms were round my chest, and others grasped my legs.

"Be very still," he whispered, as they raised me from the floor, and carried me out.

I could feel the cool air on my forehead, then a deep step down, and I was laid on the new turned soil in a shallow grave. But why so wide? The men dropped my legs and moved away.

"They have gone for your bicycle," quickly whispered the familiar voice. "I told them to bury that also to hide all trace. I shall lay it over you to keep off the weight of earth. The wheels lying flat fit on a ledge. Here is your broken indiarubber tyre. it will serve as a tube to introduce air, and keep you alive till I return."

He only just had time to say this, when the bicycle arrived. and was carefully placed over me, covered by a sack.

The end of the tube was in my mouth, concealed by the darkness of the night, while the earth was shovelled in, my friendly wheels carrying it bravely.

All was quiet, the stillness of death reigned, I lay consumed by horror in my gruesome grave, the tube working without interruption.

Every imaginable terror passed through my agonised mind, suffocation first, and then slow but sure starvation, should my rescuer fail. Every second I felt my breath must stop, I longed to move my cramped limbs, to raise myself, if but an inch.

How many hours—days—years were rolling over my head. Surely the earthy tomb had held me down through centuries of suffering.

I thought my heart was failing me, that insensibility was creeping on a-pace. The end that had only been postponed was coming, though I struggled to gasp on—on—just one more fleeting breath—and, then, oh! God——

What were those sounds above?

Fresh hope gave me fresh life. Someone was digging me out! Should I last till the blessed air fell on my fevered brow? How many spadefuls of earth before freedom—release! My mind began to wander. I fancied the accursed sod was in my mouth and eyes and ears! All the dead of many nations whispered hideous truths, and stretched out their skeleton arms to receive me. I pushed them back and shrieked aloud:

"Have mercy, God of Heaven! Spare! Spare!"

As if in answer, the cool breezes of night broke through this ghastly gloom. I opened my eyes, and the stars were shining down—the blessed stars, in the deep firmament above.

I stood on the green turf, trembling like an aspen leaf, white as a veritable corpse, clasping my deliverer's grimy hand.

"I am in the service of the police as a Nihilist," he explained in answer to my overwhelming gratitude. "I inform them when anything serious is about to occur. When I saw who had written your pass on the photograph, I determined to save you."

"And the blood?" I asked, feeling at my uninjured heart.

"That," he replied, "I got from my own body, and preserved it for the crucial moment in the tobacco pouch which I placed under your shirt."

I was speechless with wonder and thankfulness. He took me gently by the arm.

"No time to delay," he said. "Get at once to the town, and take the first train to the frontier. If you do this quickly, you will be safe."

Needless to say I took the hint at once, but before leaving, anxiously inquired how I could repay his marvellous service.

"Inform the signatory to your photograph how you were saved by No. 311." W. G.

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ASHIK KERIB.

A Turkish Story.

From the Russian of Lermontov.

Once upon a time, in the town of Tiflis, dwelt a wealthy Turk. Much gold had Allah given him; but dearer than gold to him was his only daughter, Magool Megéri. Lovely stars are in the sky; but above the stars are angels, and they are fairer still; even so Magool Megéri was fairer than all the daughters of Tiflis.

There was also living in Tiflis a poor man, Ashik Kerib. To him the Prophet had given nothing, except a lofty soul and the gift of song. Playing on the guitar, and praising the ancient heroes of Turkestan, he used to frequent weddings, to make merry for the fortunate and the rich. At one wedding he saw Magool Megéri, and they fell in love with one another. Small hope had Ashik Kerib of winning her hand, and he grew sad as the winter sky.

Well, once he lay in a garden under a vine, and at last he fell asleep. At that moment came by Magool Megéri, with her friends, and one of them espying Ashik Kerib, stopped and went up to him.

"Why sleepest thou beneath the vine?" she sang. "Arise, foolish one, thy gazelle is passing by!"

He awoke; the girl flitted away like a bird. Magool Megéri heard her song, and began to chide her.

"If thou knewest," she replied, "to whom I sang my song, thou wouldst be grateful; that is thy Ashik Kerib."

"Take me to him!" said Magool Megéri.

Seeing his sorrowful countenance, Magool Megéri began to speak and give him comfort.

"How can I help my grief," said Ashik Kerib; "I love thee, and thou wilt be never mine!"

"Ask my father for my hand," quoth she, "and my father will celebrate our wedding at his own charges, and will give me dower enough for both."

"Good," said he, "suppose Ayak Aga will grudge nothing to his daughter; but who knows that hereafter thou wilt not reproach me, saying that I had nothing, and owed everything to thee? No, gentle Magool Megéri, I have sworn an oath in my own heart; I vow for seven years to wander about the world, and to earn riches for myself; or else to die far away in the desert. If thou consent to this, when the set time comes to an end, thou shalt be mine."

She consented, but added thereto, that if on the appointed day he should not return, she would become the wife of Kurshid Bey, who had long been wooing her.

Came Ashik Kerib to his mother, received her blessing on his path, kissed his little sister, slung a wallet across his shoulder, and, leaning upon his traveller's staff, went forth from Tiflis town. And behold, a horseman overtakes him; he looks—'tis Kurshid Bey!

"Good journey to thee!" cries the Bey. "Go where thou wilt, I am thy comrade!"

No happy man was Ashik Kerib for his companion; but there was no help for it. Long did they journey together, and at last before them they saw a river. No bridge, no ford.

"Swim across," said Kurshid Bey—"I follow." Ashik Kerib folded his cloke, and swam. Once across, a glance behind him—O pity! O Almighty Allah! Kurshid Bey, seizing the cloke, was in full course back to Tiflis; only the dust was to be seen behind him, winding like a snake over the level plain. Arrived in Tiflis, the Bey takes Ashik Kerib's cloke to his old mother.

"Thy son has been drowned in a deep river," quoth he; "here is his cloke."

In woe unspeakable the mother fell upon the garment of her beloved son, and began to bathe it in hot tears; then she carried it to her who should have been her daughter, Magool Megéri.

"My son is drowned," she said. "Kurshid Bey has brought back his cloke; thou art free."

Magool Megéri smiled, and answered: "Believe it not; that is all the invention of Kurshid Bey. Until the seven years are up, no man shall be my husband."

From the wall she took down her guitar, and sang the beloved song of poor Ashik Kerib.

Meanwhile the traveller, barefoot and bareback, arrived at a village. Good folks clothed him and fed him; in return he sang them wonderful songs. In this fashion he passed from village to village, from town to town, and the fame of him spread abroad everywhere. At last he came to Khalaf. As usual, he proceeded to the coffee-house, asked for a guitar, began to sing. At that time there dwelt in Khalaf a Pasha, who was a great patron of singers. Many more they brought to him; not one of them found favour in his sight. His

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men were a-weary with going on the road. On a sudden, in passing by the coffee-house, they hear a marvellous voice. In they go.

"Either come with us to the great Pasha," they cried, "or thou answerest for it with thy head!"

"A free man am I, a stranger from Tiflis town," quoth Ashik Kerib; "as I will, I go; as I will, I go not; I sing when it suits me, and your Pasha is no master of mine." But, notwithstanding, they seized him and took him before the Pasha.

"Sing!" said the Pasha, and he began to sing. And in that song he praised his dear Magool Megéri, and that song so pleased the proud Pasha, that he kept poor Ashik Kerib with him. Gold and silver showered upon him; he gleamed in richest finery. Merry and happy was the life of Ashik Kerib, and he won great wealth. Did he forget his Magool Megéri, or not? I know not; but the time glided by. The last year must soon come to an end, but he made no preparation for his journey. Beautiful Magool Megéri began to despair. At that time a certain merchant was starting with a caravan from Tiflis, having forty camels and twice forty slaves. She called the merchant to her, and gave him a golden dish.

"Take this dish," said she, "and into what town soever thou shalt come, put this dish upon thy stall, and proclaim that he who claims my dish as the owner, and proves it, shall receive the dish, and withal, its weight in gold."

Off went the merchant; everywhere he fulfilled the behest of Magool Megéri, but no one laid claim to the golden dish. At last he had sold nigh all his wares, and with the residue he came to Khalaf. He proclaimed everywhere the bidding of Magool Megéri. Hearing of this, Ashik Kerib repairs to the caravanserai, and there he sees the golden dish on the stall of the Tiflis merchant.

"That is mine!" said he, taking it up in his hand.

"Thine, truly," said the merchant, "I recognise thee, Ashik Kerib. Get thee at once to Tiflis; thy Magool Megéri bade say to thee that the time is running out, and if thou be not there on the appointed day, she will go to another." In despair, Ashik Kerib smote his head; of the time appointed but three days remained. Howbeit, he mounted upon his horse, taking with him a parcel of gold, and away he galloped, not sparing the horse. At last the tired steed fell lifeless on Arzinyan Hill, which is between Arzinyan and Erzeroom. What was he to do? From Arzin to Tiflis was two months' journey, and there remained but two days.

"Almighty Allah!" he cried, "if thou helpest me not now, there is nothing I can do in all the world!" And he made as though to cast himself over a high precipice. Suddenly he sees beneath a man on a white horse, hears a loud voice.

"Youth, what wouldst thou do?"

"I would die," says Ashik Kerib.

"If so, come down here, and I will kill thee." Ashik Kerib somehow got down the precipice.

"Follow behind me," sternly said the horseman.

"How can I follow thee?" said Ashik Kerib. "Thy steed flies like the wind, and I am burdened with my gold."

"True. Put thy gold upon my saddle, and follow." Ashik Kerib stood still, as though he did not mean to move. "Why standest still?" asked the rider.

"Because I cannot follow after thee; thy steed is quicker than thought, and I am weary."

"True. Sit behind me on the horse, and tell me the whole truth; whither wouldst thou go?"

"If I could only get as far as Erzeroom to-day," replied Ashik.

"Shut thy eyes, then."

He shut them.

"Now open."

Ashik looked: before him were the white walls and gleaming minarets of Erzeroom.

"Guilty, Aga!" quoth Ashik. "I have sinned! I would have said that I must to Kars."

"So, so," answered the horseman, "I warned thee to tell the whole truth. Shut thy eyes again! Now open."

Ashik can hardly believe his eyes, that this is Kars. He fell on his knees, and said: "Guilty, Aga! thrice guilty thy servant Ashik Kerib; but thou knowest that if a man makes up his mind to lie in the morning, lie he must till night. In every truth I must needs to Tiflis!"

"How little is thy faith!" said the horseman, much in wrath; "but there's nothing for it, I forgive thee. Shut thy eyes. Now open," after a minute.

Ashik cried aloud for joy; they stood at the gates of Tiflis. Offering the thanks of his heart, and taking his gold from the saddle, Ashik Kerib said to the horseman: "Aga, of a truth thy goodness is great; but grant me yet one other boon. If I now tell how in one day I came from Arzinyan to Tiflis, no man will believe me; do thou give me some sign."

"Stoop down," said the other smiling; "take from under my horse's hoof a clod of earth, and put it in thy bosom; if they will not believe the truth of thy words, bid them bring thee a blind woman that has been seven years without sight, smear it on her eyes, and she shall see."

Ashik took a clod of earth from under the hoof of the white horse; but when he raised his head, horse and man had vanished. Then he knew in his soul that his protector was none other than St. George.

It was late in the evening before Ashik Kerib found himself at his own home. He knocked at the door with trembling hand, saying: "Mother, mother, open! I am God's guest; I am cold and hungry; I pray for the sake of thy wandering son, let me in!" The weak voice of the old dame made answer: "For lodging there are the houses of the rich and mighty; there is a wedding now in the town, thither wend: there thou canst pass the night in merriment."

"Mother," quoth he, "here I have no acquaintance, and therefore I repeat my prayer: for the sake of thy wandering son, let me in!" Then said his sister to her mother: "Mother, I will rise and open the door to him."

Says the mother: "Worthless girl! thou art glad to receive young men, and show them hospitality, because it is now seven years since I went blind for weeping."

But the daughter, nought heeding her reproaches, opened the door and let in Ashik Kerib. With the usual greeting, he sat down, and began to look about him with secret emotion. And this is what he saw on the wall, in a dusty wrapper—his sweet-toned guitar; and he asked his mother: "What is that hanging upon the wall?"

Quoth she: "Inquisitive guest, be content if there is a piece of bread for thee, and to-morrow go with God's blessing."

"I have already told thee," said he, "thou art my own mother, and this my sister; and therefore I ask thee to declare what this should be hanging upon the wall."

"That is a guitar, a guitar," angrily answered the old dame, believing not a word.

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"But what may that be, a guitar?"

"A guitar is that on which they play, and sing songs to it."

Then he begged her to bid his sister take down the guitar and show it to him.

"It cannot be," replied the old woman; "that is the guitar of my unhappy son, and now 'tis seven years it has been hanging there, and no living hand has touched it." But his sister arose and took down the guitar and gave it to him. Then uplifting his eyes to Heaven, he uttered this prayer.

"Oh, Almighty Allah! If I am to attain to my desire, then may my seven-stringed lute be in tune, as on that day when last I played upon it!" Then he smote upon the copper strings, and the strings rang out harmonious; and he began to sing:

"A poor wanderer I, and my words are poor; but the great St. George hath helpen me to climb down the steep precipice. Although I am poor, and poor my words, know me, mother, thy wandering son!"

After this his mother began to weep, and bespake him: "How do they name thee?"

"Trueheart," he answered.

"Speak once, listen oft, Trueheart," said she. "By thy speech thou hast torn my heart in pieces. This very night in my sleep I saw that on my head the hair is white. 'Tis now seven years since I went blind for weeping. Tell me, thou that hast his voice, when will my son return?"

And twice with tears she repeated her request. In vain he declared himself to be her son, she believed him not. And after some time he asked her:

"Thy leave, mother dear, to take the guitar and go out. I have heard that hard by they have a wedding; my sister will lead the way. I will play and sing, and all that I earn I will bring back here and share it with you."

"I will not grant thee leave," replied the dame. "Ever since my son is not, his guitar has not passed out of my house."

Then he began to swear that he would not hurt a single string. "But if even one string break," went on Ashik, "I will answer for it with all that I have."

The old woman felt his parcel of gold, and finding that it was full of coins, she let him go. Leading him to the rich house, where were the sounds of the wedding feast, his sister waited by the door to hear what should happen.

In that house lived Magool Megéri, and on that night she must become the wife of Kurshid Bey. Kurshid Bey was feasting with his kinsfolk; but Magool Megéri, seated behind a curtain with her companions, held in one hand a cup of poison, and in the other hand a keen dagger. She had sworn to die before she would stoop to become the wife of Kurshid Bey. And from amongst the group of girls, she heard how a stranger came in, who said:

"Salaam aleikam! Here ye are making merry and feasting, so grant to me, a poor stranger, to sit with you, and in return I will sing to you a song."

"Why not?" said Kurshid Bey. "Here should be open house for singers and dancers, for here is a wedding feast. Sing something, minstrel, and I will reward thee with a handful of gold."

Then Kurshid Bey asked him: "But how do they name thee, wayfarer?"

"Soon-will-ye-know."

"What kind of name is that?" asked the other with a laugh; "that name I never heard before."

Then he took his guitar, and began to sing:

"In the town of Khalaf I drank wine; but God gave me wings, and I flew hither in three days."

The brother of Kurshid Bey, a man of little wit, drew his sword, shouting: "Thou liest! How is it possible to travel from Khalaf hither in three days?"

"Why wouldst thou kill me?" said Ashik. "Minstrels are wont to foregather from all the four quarters of the earth; believe me, believe me not, I rob you of nothing."

Quoth the bridegroom: "Let him go on," and Ashik Kerib sang again.

"Morning prayer I said in the vale of Arzinyan, and midday prayer on the hill of Erzeroom; before the setting of the sun I said my prayer on the hill of Kars, and at evening I prayed in Tiflis. Allah gave me wings, and I flew hither; God grant that I might sacrifice my life for the white horse! He galloped swift, like a dancer on the rope, from hill to valley, from valley to hill; our Lord gave wings to Ashik, and he flew to the wedding of Magool Megéri."

Then Magool Megéri knew his voice: she threw poison one way, knife the other. "And that is how thou keepest thine oath!" said a friend to her; "is it so, that this night thou wilt be wife to Kurshid Bey?"

"Ye knew it not, but I knew the voice so sweet to me," replied Magool Megéri; and seizing a knife, she rent the curtain through. No sooner had she looked and recognised her Ashik Kerib, she cried aloud and threw herself on his neck, and both fell down in a swoon. At them with his sword leapt the brother of Kurshid Bey, to thrust them through; but Kurshid Bey stayed him, saying:

"Calm thyself, and know, that from a man's birth 'tis written in his forehead, that which he cannot avoid."

When she came to herself, Magool Megéri blushed for shame; she hid her face in her hands, and retired behind the curtain.

"Now it is truly clear that thou art Ashik Kerib," said the bridegroom; "but explain how in so short a time thou couldst accomplish such a journey?"

"In proof of my truthfulness," quoth Ashik, "my sabre will cut through a stone; if I lie, my neck shall be thinner than a hair. But best of all, bring me a blind woman, who for seven years has not seen God's world, and I will restore her sight." Ashik Kerib's sister, standing in the hall beside the door, heard this speech, and went for her mother.

"Mother mine!" cried she, "that is truly my brother and truly thy son, Ashik Kerib!" and taking the old dame by the hand, she led her to the wedding-feast.

Then Ashik Kerib took out of his bosom the clod of earth, mixed it with water and anointed his mother's eyes, saying: "Know, all people, what is the might and greatness of St. George!" and his mother received her sight. After that durst no man doubt the truth of his report, and Kurshid Bey silently yielded him the beautiful Magool Megéri.

Then in his joy Ashik Kerib said to him: "Hearken, Kurshid Bey, I have a gift for thee. My sister is no less worthy than thy former bride; I am rich, and she will have silver and gold no less; so take her to thee, and be ye as happy together as I am with my beloved Magool Megéri."

W. H. D. Rouse.

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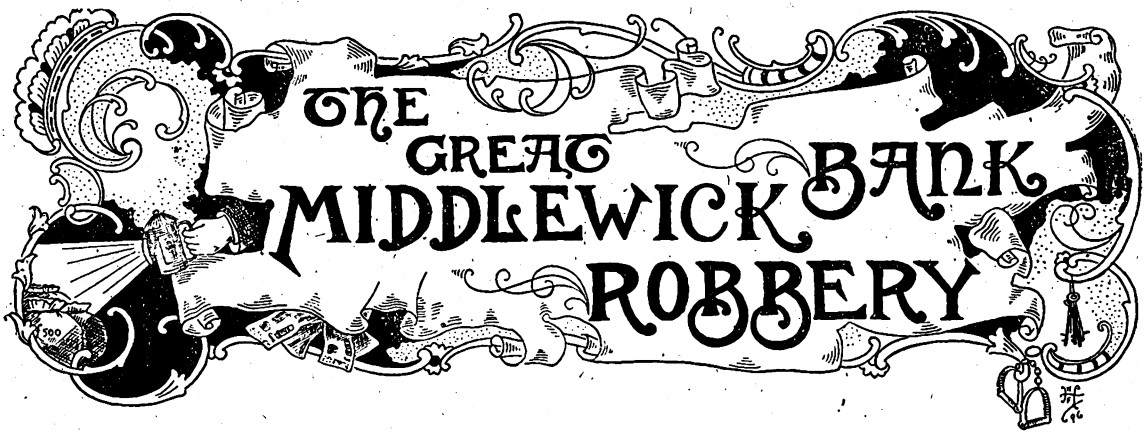

SUMMARY.

Mr. Bryant, *Manager of Middlewick Bank.*
Herbert Stewart, *Cashier.*
Frank Rutherford, *Book-keeper.*
Alfred Taylor, *Detective.*
John Warren, *Old Watchman.*
Jack Burton, *New Watchman—a detective in disguise.*
Miss Denton, *Bryant's niece, and in love with Rutherford.*

£20,000 is stolen from the Bank one night while John Warren is asleep. The only persons apparently aware of the key to the combination lock are Mr. Bryant and Mr. Stewart. Taylor interviews Mr. Bryant and the new watchman, Jack Burton, who, by his movements, appears to be a colleague of Taylor, unknown to Mr. Bryant. Taylor is led to suspect Frank Rutherford of having obtained the key to the lock, and shadows him. He visits the Bank during the night to talk matters over with his colleague, Jack Burton, and while there Mr. Bryant comes in, and Taylor hides. After he has gone, and as Taylor is leaving, they see a figure watching the Bank.

CHAPTER V.

I must Do my Duty.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed, and the figure at the opposite corner did not leave his post of observation.

"We'll easily tire him out," said the detective; "he'll have to give in before morning."

"Hush! he is impatient already."

In the uncertain light of the lamp near the corner, the faint outline of a man could now and then be discerned, standing well back in the shadow of the building. As if tired of standing in one position so long, the stranger changed his pose, thus enabling the watchers to observe him in the gloom.

Suddenly he stepped plainly into view, and hurried round the corner, taking precisely the opposite course from that of the man whom the detective attempted to follow.

"Now, Alf," whispered the watchman, opening the door so rapidly that it moved without the slightest sound.

Without a word the detective slipped through and was after the individual who had so long tried their patience.

Taylor made no mistake this time, for the street was sufficiently well lighted to allow him to keep his man in sight. But though the hour was late, the couple were not the only ones abroad. Other pedestrians were astir, some going away from and some approaching the detective. Had the one whom he was shadowing known the fact, he could easily have eluded his pursuer by wheeling about and taking the reverse course; but evidently he was unaware of the figure behind him, and every minute lessened the possibility of his escaping him.

At the second turning, the one in advance turned to the left. Taylor immediately broke into a run, decreasing by at least one half the distance between them. When at last he turned the corner he was not more than fifty yards behind the other, who was so plainly in sight that the pursuer was sure of him.

Taylor had already recognised him as Mr. Frank Rutherford, whom he had shadowed earlier in the evening.

"Hulloa!" muttered the detective, as the the other made a second turn, which brought him in sight of Mr. Bryant's residence; "this has a queer look. Surely he can't intend making a late call?"

Taylor now thought it best to slip across the street, and he did so without being noticed. The other, so far as he could judge, did not look round—proof that he had no suspicion of the individual who was keeping so close to him.

Once again the pursuer increased the distance between them. Though there was little lamplight, the moon gave enough illumination for all purposes; and if the book-keeper discovered who was following him, the game would be up, at least so far as Taylor was concerned.

Slower and slower became the pace, until, when nearly opposite "Glenmora," the one in advance halted. He now looked round as if to make sure that no one was in sight; but the detective, no novice at his profession, had anticipated this act and shrank so close to the houses that he was in no danger of being seen.

"He is watching Mr. Bryant's house," was Taylor's conclusion; "he expects to see something, and *he* is expected, too."

Darkness reigned in the first floor of Mr. Bryant's residence, but a light was still burning in one of the upper rooms, the blind of one window of which had not been drawn down. That there was someone on the watch in that apartment was proved by the action of the young man, though the detective, with all his acuteness, could not discover what it was that guided the person standing near the gate.

Rutherford drew a match from his pocket and lit a cigar, at which he puffed vigorously until the end was aglow. Then, when certain that the crimson point could be seen, he raised it above his head, still facing the house, and circled it several times from left to right, the same number of times in reverse order, and then repeated the first gyration.

At the moment of completing the last circle, the light in the upper room of "Glenmora" was extinguished, and all became perfect darkness.

"That's a proof that the signal of the young gentleman was seen and understood," was Taylor's conclusion; "though the person on the look-out up there took good care to keep out of sight."

All his interest now centred in the young book-keeper on the opposite side of the street, who, having completed the errand which had taken him to "Glenmora," turned and leisurely retraced his steps.

The detective waited until he was secure from observation, and then followed the young man at a safe distance until he reached the home which Taylor had held under surveillance earlier in the evening, at the time he met with his adventure with the policeman who mistook him for a burglar.

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While it was hardly natural for one to return so soon to the scene of his escape, the detective made sure that no one was on the watch for him before trusting himself near the shop from whose door he had darted in such haste.

As it was, he held aloof until he saw the young man enter the gate to his home. The light was still aglow in the upper room from the window of which he had seen the mother look out. A few minutes after the son's entrance it went out, and the whole house was in darkness.

"That disposes of Mr. Rutherford for to-night," said the watcher to himself.

Despite the lateness of the hour, the detective returned to his hotel by way of the bank, scrutinising the building closely as he passed.

If he meditated making another call upon the watchman, the detective changed his mind, at the sight of a policeman, and walked with as brisk a pace as was prudent to the hotel. He had been up the best part of the preceding night, and therefore determined to make the best use of his time by securing the opportunity to rest which now offered itself.

Taylor's first proceeding in the morning was to visit Mr. Bryant at his private residence. From the manager's own lips he had learned that it was seldom he was at the bank before eleven o'clock, but so thoroughly had the burglary roused him out of his usual routine that the caller found him ready to start. After greeting his visitor pleasantly, Mr. Bryant led the way to the library for a talk.

"I suppose it is too early for you to have discovered anything yet?" remarked the host.

"Yes. I was pretty tired and thought the best preparation for a good day's work was a refreshing night's rest, so I took it."

"That was wise. I can't say that I was as fortunate for this matter bears so heavily on my mind that my slumber is much broken. I went to the bank again last night, a little before midnight."

"May I inquire the cause of *that?*"

"I was nervous. What you said about the new watchman made me so distrustful that I decided to visit him unexpectedly."

"I thought," remarked Taylor with a smile, "that after reading Mr. Cartwright's letter I congratulated you on having so trustworthy a fellow."

"So you did; but it was the doubt in your face when I first told you what I had done that disturbed me."

"Well, how did you find things?"

"First class. The new man is a treasure. He made me show myself before he would admit me, and then coolly said that if I hadn't done as he requested he would have shot me."

"That's the kind of man you want, and Mr. Cartwright knew what he was doing when he recommended him to you."

"Yes, and I shall have no further apprehension on *that* score."

"But," said the detective, more gravely than he had yet spoken. "The reason for my visit this morning is, I wish to speak to you about your book-keeper—Rutherford, I believe is his name."

Taylor observed a dull flush overspread the banker's face as he asked:

"And what of *him?*"

"You must be aware he is one of the parties about whom—ah—it is my duty to make some inquiries."

"I should sooner suspect my niece upstairs than him."

This remark impressed the detective oddly in view of what he had witnessed the preceding night.

"You told me yesterday that you have never had occasion to distrust him."

"Never; he is the only child of a widowed mother, as I told you, and a more devoted son never breathed. It would break her heart if any ill befel him."

"I sincerely hope nothing of the kind will occur. But, in order to do my full duty, I must be thorough. Can you furnish me with a specimen of Mr. Rutherford's handwriting?"

Mr. Bryant looked fixedly in the face of his caller for some seconds without speaking. The detective calmly returned the gaze, each countenance motionless but expressive.

"Don't ask me any questions, please," added Taylor in a low voice; "but if you can, do as I request."

The host sat silent a minute longer, and then, without a word, rose and walked to his desk. He fumbled among some papers until he found the one for which he was searching. Then he walked towards the detective with the letter in his hand.

"Last Christmas the directors, on my recommendation, decided to make an advance in Mr. Rutherford's salary. As an appropiate Yuletide present I sent him this letter, and here is his acknowledgment, written in such good taste that I filed it away. I will lend it to you for a few days, if you wish."

"Many thanks. To make the matter complete," added Taylor, after glancing hastily over the missive, "yours ought to keep it company. I observe they are fastened together, and it is just as well not to separate them."

"Mr. Rutherford, of course, has the notification which I sent, and, I presume, treasures it highly. The one you have there is merely the rough draft of the letter I was instructed to write. Under the circumstances, I did something more than indite a formal communication. It seems to me the case called for it. What do *you* think?"

"Mr. Rutherford's reply is so grateful and well expressed, dwelling on the manner in which you have referred to his services, that I have some curiosity to peruse your own letter."

All men have their weak points. The detective had touched that of the banker, who plainly was pleased by the delicate flattery of his visitor. Truth to tell, Mr. Bryant had spent a good deal of labour on his letter and was proud of the result. With some protestations, therefore, he allowedhis visitor to retain both the documents after exacting a promise from him that he would return them in a few days.

A footstep in the room above suddenly recalled to the

"May I inquire the cause of that?"

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Bade her an affectionate good-bye.

detective's mind another point on which he was in want of information. Mr. Bryant's library was immediately below the room in which the light had shone the night before when someone within awaited the signal of Mr. Rutherford's cigar.

"Have you children visiting in the house, Mr. Bryant?" he inquired.

"No; why do you ask?"

"I just now heard someone in your room overhead, and from the lightness of the footstep concluded it was a child."

"That is my niece. My room is at the back, where I am not so liable to be disturbed by the street traffic."

Mr. Taylor had gained the knowledge he sought.

The two rose to their feet, preparatory to leaving the house, when the same dainty footfall sounded on the stairs. Mr. Bryant stepped into the hall, where he kissed his ward and bade her an affectionate good-bye. The detective respectfully loitered behind, but as he followed his host through the front door he managed to obtain a glimpse of the girl, who, of course, was, the lady he had seen the night before.

"A woman's instinct is unerring," reflected Taylor, as he walked beside the banker down the winding gravelled path to the street. "Can it be that she has any suspicion of my purpose in paying such an early morning visit? I have learned that a tender feeling exists between her and the book-keeper of the bank, and that the proud uncle is not averse to it. He must think very highly of the young man thus to encourage their love. I hope it will not be my fate to bring sorrow upon the couple; but, if so, it will not be the first I have been compelled to strike, and I must do my duty—I must do my duty."

CHAPTER VI.

"What's to be Done?"

Mr. Taylor felt that he had secured a number of threads floating and drifting within his reach, which, if rightly handled, could be woven into something.

While he had not yet settled upon the one who was the guilty party, he had picked up several important clues. A man in his position needs to avoid the fatal mistake of jumping to conclusions without proper evidence. One of the pitfalls of the detective is to set out with a certain theory and then try to force his facts to fit his beliefs instead of following the opposite course in his investigations.

There should be no theory at all at the beginning of the case except a very general one. As the discoveries appear, they will of themselves suggest the proper line of thought. On the other hand, it is impossible not to form a suspicion with the first glimmer of truth.

Suspicion in this case pointed to Frank Rutherford, the book-keeper of the Middlewick Bank, and all that had been learned so far strengthened that suspicion. But the most lamentable part of the belief formed by the professional was that Miss Denton, the accomplished niece of the bank manager, was implicated with the wrong-doer, if indeed she were not an actual accomplice in the crime.

The words which Taylor had overheard, their manner

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when together, and, above all, that singular signalling between them when the young man returned from his station opposite his bank, where he had been on the watch for more than an hour: all these pointed unerringly in a single direction.

True the partnership of a beautiful and accomplished young lady of the highest character in a bank burglary was was almost beyond credence. In all his experience the detective had never known anything of the kind. But the sagacious Taylor was ever ready with a charitable explanation which virtually absolved her from guilt.

It was he, Rutherford, her lover and admirer, who had planned and plotted the whole thing. He had taken her into his confidence, and through her affection for him, she had yielded. The deed being done, regret and repentance followed, when they promised to be too late.

The detective grimly closed his lips and resolved again that he would do his duty with no regard for the consequences to anyone.

From Mr. Bryant's residence he went to his hotel. He decided to meet Burton that they might compare notes and consult together. He expected to find him waiting at the hotel, but saw nothing of him. Taylor knew where he lodged, but preferred not to go there fearing to attract attention to the watchman.

"Mr. Rollett" made inquiries if any letters had come for him, but there were none. Disappointed, he ascended to his room on the second floor. Sitting down at the window which overlooked the street he immediately made a startling discovery.

He saw a man walking slowly on the opposite side, smoking a cigar and swinging a walking stick, something after the manner of the detective himself. He gave one the impression of being a person who had nothing special on hand and had only to dawdle away the hours. Just opposite the hote this individual met another person of ordinary appearancel also smoking, but, instead of carrying a stick, he kept both, hands in his trousers pockets.

They passed as though strangers, neither appearing to recognise the other. And yet, as the detective well knew, they were intimate associates, or rather confederates in crime. Those two were desperate criminals, and had been concerned in some of the most sensational burglaries in the country. It was they who were concerned in the robbery of a county bank in the North of England when the faithful cashier was shot and one of the clerks crippled for life. And yet the cunning miscreants managed the affair so skilfully that it was impossible to convict them. One was Joe Nash, and the other, Will King. Each travelled under half-a-dozen aliases, but those names were the ones by which they were best known to the authorities.

One quick glance, as he saw them in the sunlight, left no doubt of their identity. Taylor knew them as well as he did the watchman, but the question which overwhelmed the detective was as to the cause of the presence of these two criminals in Middlewick on this day in May.

Had it been several days earlier, the explanation would have been self-evident. They were there to plan and carry out the robbery of the bank, but that had already been accomplished. The whole thing was one of those mysterious phases of crime which often baffle the most expert detective. Only one conclusion seemed reasonable, that was that they were in collusion with the book-keeper and were staying in Middlewick to complete the division of the plunder. The entrance to the bank was so simple that they needed no help. Having the combination given to them by Rutherford, it was comparatively easy to do the rest.

This, it seemed, was the only explanation which could be formulated, but it was far from satisfactory. The principal objection was that if ever Nash and King succeeded in robbing a bank, they would never wait to divide with any partner. The theory pre-supposed that they had done the actual burglarising, and that being the case they would have wasted no time in Middlewick after completing the work.

But it was a waste of time thus to speculate. Taylor felt that Burton must be seen without delay. Enough has been told to show their joint interests in unearthing the guilty ones—an interest which was to continue to the end.

But the detective preserved his coolness. He didn't forget that while the two criminals were so well known to him, he also was known to them and sure of recognition in the event of meeting them undisguised.

With the facilities always at command, he made a number of changes in his appearance. Confident that the men, as yet, were unaware of his presence in the little country town, he retained the business suit he had worn from the first. The changes in his looks were comparatively slight. Taylor was a man who relied much upon his power of facial expression. He could do wonders in that line. Then, by assuming an altogether different bearing the contrast was more effective than that which could be made by dye, false hair, beard, and the ordinary contrivances used by the amateur. Besides, if he had the metamorphosis too marked it was liable to cause him trouble with the hotel proprietor.

But Taylor found no difficulty in mixing with the other guests without attracting attention. Sauntering to the desk, he glanced over the visitors' book; neither Nash nor King had subscribed under any name. It followed, therefore, that their headquarters were somewhere else, and as the Middlewick House was the only hotel in the place, they must have taken rooms. Since also the criminals took opposite directions, it would seem that it was easy for the detective to track one of them.

Confident in doing so, he sauntered forward, somewhat after his manner of the night before, but, at the end of an hour, hadn't caught sight of either. They had vanished as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed them.

It was indispensable, for reasons which will duly appear, that he should see Burton without delay, so, despite the reluctance to go to his lodgings, Taylor hurried thither.

The new watchman made his home with a humble couple, an old man and his wife who had no other lodgers. Much to the detective's relief, he found his friend within and went up to his room unannounced. The watchman glanced up with a smile, when he noticed the changes Taylor had made in his looks. He further judged that something unusual had taken place.

"I was there."

"I expected you at the hotel," was the somewhat dissatisfied remark of the visitor.

"I was there."

"When?"

"About half-an-hour ago."

"Then you must have called after I left?"

"Well, it was not my fault that I did not see you."

"But why didn't you come earlier?"

"I did."

"When?"

"Rather over an hour ago."

"That was while I was at Mr. Bryant's house."

"It strikes me, Alf, that if you expect a friend to call at your place you ought to be in to receive him."

"I have nothing to say on that point. But Burton, what do you think?"

"A good many things when the necessity arises. You seem agitated over something."

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"I have reason to be. Joe Nash and Will King are here."

"I knew it."

"You did? Why didn't you tell me?"

"My dear fellow, I have just explained that I called twice to give you the news, but didn't find you in. Then I came home to get ready for to-night; if I'm not mistaken things will be stirring."

"What do you make of it?"

Instead of replying Burton smiled and said:

"I will answer you after you have given me *your* explanation."

The detective gave the theory already stated, to the effect that the two criminals had had a hand in the burglary of a couple of nights before, and were staying in Middlewick to complete the business with their confederate, Frank Rutherford.

But Burton shook his head. "That won't do, Alf. You're altogether on the wrong track."

"Well, then, set me right."

"I don't know that I can. A little thought, however, will soon convince you that it is impossible for you to be correct."

"We won't argue the matter—I'll give in; but let me hear what you think of it."

Burton lit his pipe, and leant back in his chair.

"To my mind this business has taken the strangest turn of anything in which I was ever engaged."

"I formed that opinion before I met you to-day."

"I know, or at least suspect, to what you refer, but I believe that Nash and King are in Middlewick for the purpose of robbing the bank."

"The dickens! There must be mighty little left of which to rob it."

"Quite right, but that's where the joke comes in. They have looked over the ground before selecting this place for their attention. The sleepy watchman, the old-fashioned lock—all the conditions were so favourable that they naturally fixed upon the Middlewick Bank as one of the easiest in the country to be cracked. But that was days before the recent robbery."

"Then they have planned to rob a bank that has just been robbed?"

"Precisely."

"And, of course, do not suspect that they are a day too late for the fair?"

Burton lit his pipe.

"That's my belief. The secret has been better kept than one would have supposed, considering it is known to so many."

"There isn't a policeman in the town that suspects it. Neither Joe Nash, Will King, or Sam Birch dream of such a thing."

"Sam Birch; what has *he* to do with the business?"

"He's here too."

"Anybody else?"

"That's the lot; I've seen them all."

"And have they seen *you*?"

"No; I was lucky. You know before I left home I did all the disguising necessary, for it might be awkward to work up any changes after taking a situation as watchman. The manager might mistake me for a burglar."

"You're right. Your own mother would hardly know you now."

"For all that, however, I fought shy of these three gentlemen and am sure they have not the slightest idea of my being here."

"They're not staying at the hotel."

"No, I know that. They are stopping at a house in the town."

"Where is it?"

"I don't know. They're too sharp to give themselves away at this stage of the game. I tried to find out, but had to give it up. You're pretty well disguised, Alf, suppose you undertake that job."

"I'll try it, of course, but doubt if I'll succeed. You are sure they have no suspicion that you're playing watchman?"

"I don't think so. I should feel insulted if I thought they did."

"They will try the bank to-night—that is, if any reliance can be placed upon appearances."

"Undoubtedly."

"Well," remarked the amazed detective, "this is a joke. I have heard of a man trying to shoot with a gun, forgetting that it has already been discharged, but I never knew of a gang of burglars attempting to rob a bank which has already been robbed."

"Nor have I. We seem in a fair way to establish some precedents before we are fairly through with this business."

"What's to be done?"

"Why, nab them, of course."

"How?"

"What can be more simple when we know their plans? These gentry generally make their calls about midnight or one o'clock. We'll be ready for them, Alf."

The detective was silent for a minute or two.

"Do you think we ought to undertake it alone?"

"I have seriously considered that point. If there were but two, I wouldn't ask for any better amusement, but we shall find it difficult to handle three, that is so as to make sure of capturing them all. I don't want any to get away."

"But what is your plan?"

"We must take the police superintendent into our confidence. From what I've heard of him, I think he's a sensible fellow. We'll get him to let us have two of his best men. We'll place them inside the bank, or within reach; then, at the right minute, we'll close in. What's simpler?"

"The scheme seems a good one, as it should be coming from *you*; but we ought to have something in the nature of a rehearsal. You will take your place as usual to play the watchman?"

"No. I think I will put the old watchman, Warren, on duty again."

"And why?"

"You must remember that our three friends have founded their campaign on the belief that the sleepy old fellow is still in charge. If they see me go in instead they may postpone the business until they have time to investigate, and when they investigate, and find that the business has already been done for them, they'll decide not to waste any more time."

"Will you explain to Mr. Bryant?"

"Not until it's over. He'll ask too many questions, and is already so upset that he will be sure to 'bungle' matters, and, more than likely, give the whole show away. I'll go to Warren himself, and let him think the manager intends giving him another trial. The only trouble is, he will be pretty likely to keep awake when I specially want him to go to sleep. He will be so anxious to regain his character that he will be supernaturally vigilant. I shouldn't be surprised if he showed fight, thereby rendering it necessary for the visitors to give him a pretty good whack over the head to quiet him."

"It will serve him right—that is, if the crack isn't too hard, and those fellows wouldn't hesitate about giving him one."

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"The power of habit is strong, so I think after all Warren will spend the night as he has been accustomed to spend it for the last twelve years. Anyhow, I'll take the chances."

"Well, since that's settled, let's fix the particulars. Shall I see the Police Superintendent?"

"Yes, arrange with him, and I'll manage about the watchman."

"What of placing the policemen inside the bank?"

"Easy enough to do that. The trio won't appear in the neighbourhood until the night is well advanced. One of them may take a walk past about ten o'clock, just to assure himself that everything is straight; but we'll get the men in before that."

"What will Warren think?"

"More than likely he'll be snoring by that time. If he isn't, he'll be told that suspicious characters have been seen about, and that we think it best he should have company. He won't object."

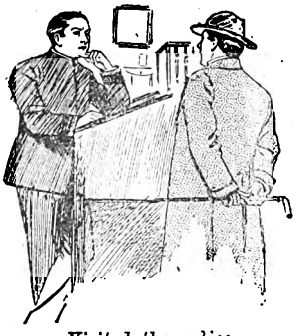
"Who generally keeps watch?"

"Sam Birch—that's his business. He's awfully good at it, too."

The plan outlined by Burton was followed as closely as possible. He and the detective divided the work between them, and each understood his own and the other's part.

Taylor, keeping a sharp look out for the burglars, visited the police superintendent and explained matters. The official proved to be an intelligent gentleman, who proffered all the assistance in his power. He called in two of his best men, before whom the matter was laid, and eagerly entered into.

They were to saunter by the bank precisely at nine o'clock that evening. Burton—whose appearance Taylor minutely described—would stroll past at the same moment on the other side of the street, returning as it were from a reconnaissance of the enemy's lines. If he took off his hat and wiped his forehead, it would mean that the coast was clear, and they were to enter the bank without hesitation. If, on the other hand, he did not remove his hat, they were to saunter past without giving any attention to the bank or seemingly to the watchman. This manœuvre was to be repeated precisely fifteen minutes later, and, if necessary, at similar intervals until the way should open.



Visited the police superintendent.

Warren within would be instructed to keep the door unlocked until the police entered. Once inside the building they were to place themselves as their judgment suggested best to make sure of capturing the criminals. Taylor and Burton would remain outside until they heard a prearranged signal from the policeman within. It was the wish of the couple to secure Sam Birch—one of the most notorious burglars of the day.

He would be on the watch outside, and the instant he suspected what was going on, would take good care to save himself, his position being such that he could easily do so.

Having duly arranged the preliminaries, Taylor and Burton sent out to put them in execution, neither dreaming of the astounding complications which were to ensue in the course of that eventful night.

(To be continued.)

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If success in life is realising our dreams, as someone defines it, I may be permitted to boast of a certain measure of success, for my dearest dream when a boy was to make a tour through England on foot, and I was little more than twenty-one when I left London to carry out that project.

I was fresh from my books, had a splendid stock of money, and a large assortment of enthusiasm, good health, and small experience, and these combined with youth to make a very good imitation of happiness, especially when you are realising your dream all the while.

The time of my wanderings was not restricted by anything but my resources, so I loitered away whole weeks in pretty out-of-the-way spots and grey old historic towns, saturating myself with their feeling and refreshing my memory about their traditions, acting these out with my imagination in their proper settings before my bodily eyes in approved young tourist fashion.

I found abundant entertainment of my favourite sort in Coventry. Little Grayfriars' Hospital, untouched, unchanged since the Middle Ages, used to occupy a good deal of my attention, partly for its own sake, and partly for the sake of the cement and wood of which it is built, which vividly recalled Shakespeare's house to my mind.

I rummaged in the library, revelling particularly in an edition of "Fox's Martyrs," nine volumes, folio, with facsimiles of the original plates. "Fox's Martyrs" had been my Sunday reading when I was a small boy; the grim, creepy language used to give me a choice sensation of horror, to which I never became *blasé*, although here in Coventry the volumes only looked like kindly remembrancers of home. They burned people at the stake in Coventry as late as in any part of England. Godcake was the singular name of the place where the poor people were roasted, a place where they could look up to the church spires, the calm, senseless symbols of the faith they were dying for—and by.

The library was my favourite haunt, and there the fixed attention a queer little old man used to bestow upon me ended by attracting mine to him. We were soon on speaking terms, and found each other mutually amusing. My being an American seemed an endless source of wonder and curiosity to him, and his eccentricity, abruptness, and fund of odd information delighted me. One day he said to me, in his queer fashion:

"The last man gibbeted in England was gibbeted in Coventry."

"What is gibbeting?" I asked.

"Hanging a man to a tree till the birds eat him," he answered with a sort of ghastly relish.

I thought of Macbeth's threat to his messenger:

> Upon the next tree shalt thou hang alive
> Till famine cling thee,

which my ear first caught: "Till famine *clean* thee," and this was so exhaustively graphic to my early imagination, that I had brought myself to give it up with great difficulty.

"I can tell you a very queer incident about this place, and one of its customs," he continued. "Have you ever heard of Lady Godiva?"

I blushed and bit my thumb, and coyly admitted so much sophistication.

"Perhaps you know, then," resumed the old man, "that here in Coventry, up to within a few years, it has been the custom to celebrate her famous ride by a procession, at the head of which rides a woman personating Lady Godiva, and imitating her costume as far as the police will permit. All guilds and societies used to take part in the procession, and there was the greatest amount of city pride and feeling about the whole matter. Any scepticism about the existence of Lady Godiva, or the historic truth of her ride, is to Coventry people what an insinuation that William Tell is a myth would be to a Swiss; she is an article of faith with them. This year that I speak of they had engaged a woman from a circus to personate Lady Godiva."

"Accustomed to the costume?" I suggested with mild jocosity; but the old man took it as seriously as possible.

"Quite so," he said, "that, and the riding, and all. She was a handsome woman—that is—perhaps I shouldn't think her so handsome now, but then the whole committee thought her so," and the old rogue's cheeks grew a diffident red.

"Ah, you were on the committee to select the heroine?" said I.

"Yes," he replied judicially, as if he was sorry he had admitted it, but was determined not to recede, "and

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now comes in the curious circumstance. The day after she was engaged she disappeared—disappeared from her lodgings, from the circus company, from Coventry itself. It was impossible to find her, and she attended none of the advertised rehearsals—for the whole affair used to be rehearsed as carefully as a Shakespeare revival, or any other spectacle.

"The weeks passed, the drills went on, and they almost gave her up for lost. I say almost, for there was always the chance that she might come back, which prevented them, from day to day, from engaging another Godiva, until the very day before the procession was to take place. They were at their wits' end, and did not know what to do. As I said, this was a matter to which the mayor and the town authorities gave their attention; they felt that a procession without any Lady Godiva was not only *Hamlet* with Hamlet left out—you've heard that expression, I suppose—but a disgrace to Coventry, and a blow to the dignity of England. In the midst of their distracted deliberation, another young woman from the circus volunteered to take the part of Godiva at this short notice, and calm was restored to the town council.

"The next morning at the appointed hour the procession organised in line, and the impromptu Lady Godiva took her place at the head of the troops, in long red wig and scanty attire. Something of the dilemma the authorities had been in had got rumoured about, and the excitement and the crowd were immense.

"The trumpet sounded for the start. There was a grand flourish, when suddenly a woman's scream brought everything to a standstill.

"There stood Lady Godiva Number One, her long red hair—she didn't have to wear a wig—floating about *her* scanty attire. She stormed up to Lady Godiva Number Two, and, before any one could interfere, had dragged her from her horse, and the two had engaged in a regular pitched battle. They fought and tore each other's faces and hair like two furies. They were both in love with the same man, which added animus to their caresses, as you may fancy When they were separated, though, which do you think carried the day?"

"Whichever fought the best," I suggested.

"Now, that's very well said, but as far as the fighting went there wasn't much choice," said the old man, rubbing his hands and shaking his head in retrospective enjoyment. "But the crowd and the authorities decided in favour of the second Lady Godiva, because, they said, the first had violated her contract by her disappearance immediately after her engagement. It was settled in very short order, the first Lady Godiva had to retire, much enraged, and the second put on her wig and rode away at the head of the procession, highly elated with her success. That was not the end of it, though, oh, no, not by any means. The first Lady Godiva appealed to the laws of her country."

"Indeed," said I.

"Yes, indeed," asseverated the old man, thinking, as usual, that I questioned his veracity. "I couldn't deceive you about the suit, because, don't you see, you could go and consult the records and find all the papers. It's true. She went to law and sued the mayor and the town authorities, for not letting her appear as Lady Godiva, after engaging her. There was nothing at all in her contract about rehearsals, or the disposal of her time between the day of her engagement and the day of the procession. She contracted to ride as Lady Godiva on such a day at such an hour, and she appeared to time. It was a clear case. She won her suit, and the town authorities had to pay a sum."

"To pay a——?" I queried.

"A sum, a sum of money—damages," he insisted querulously. "You can fancy how a layman's mind would work about the ride; she had exasperated them by keeping them in suspense about her appearance, so when she presented herself, and they had it in their power to humiliate her, as they thought, they declined in favour of her rival. They found out their mistake in court," and the old fellow chuckled anew.

"Did it ever come out why she disappeared, or where she was?" I asked.

"Now, the gossip was that a lawyer of the town secreted her until the final hour, foreseeing the course events would take," he replied, looking at me keenly.

"The damages must have been high to tempt the lawyer to take the risk," said I.

"It was a sum—a sum," he repeated. "It didn't do much more than cover the expenses of secreting the girl, but the money was not altogether what the lawyer had in mind. He was ambitious, and he wished to do what has since become more common, I understand—to begin his career with a sensation. He did it—he did it with a vengeance—he had all the sensation he wanted."

A swarm of questions came to my lips, but I had not sufficient confidence to ask them, and the next day I left Coventry. Other incidents drove the old man and his story from my memory, until one day in London both were brought vividly to mind by seeing the old fellow at a railway station, accompanied by a queer old woman as remarkable in her way as he in his.

They took the same train as I, but a different carriage. However, when I saw them get out I had the curiosity to follow them.

The old man saw to the sending of some luggage, and then, giving his arm to his companion, they set out on a brisk walk, threading the extremely new looking streets with the air of people who were familiar with the place. At last they turned in at the gates of a very pretentious villa, which looked immodestly apparent through the thin young trees on the grounds. I stood still, looking after the pair.

"Rum old gentleman, ain't he?" said a voice at my elbow. A rather well-dressed man was the speaker. He might have been the shopkeeper of the suburb.

"Who are they?" I asked.

"This mansion," he replied, with pride, "is the residence of Sir Samuel Boggs, formerly Lord Mayor of London; and the old people, his father and mother, come up from Coventry once a year to make him a visit. They never tell him just when they're coming, and people do say he ain't over anxious to have 'em come, for he's a great swell, and his father's terrible queer, and his mother she's queerer. They say she was a circus rider, and the old gent ran away with her and married her in Paris, while she was under engagement to ride Lady Godiva at the head of the Coventry procession. There was a great row about it, she——"

"Yes," said I, "I heard of the case when I was in Coventry."

Annie Townsend.

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THE POWER OF LOVE.

A Story Found Among the Pompeian Papyri.

During the excavations made in the presence of the King of Naples, in 1815, a fresco of singular beauty was discovered, representing a group of nymphs with their eyes turned towards a central figure. Behind the latter a youthful Love, bending gracefully at her ear, appeared to be whispering some mystery.

The sprightly, eager pose of the little whisperer, the delightful drawing of the nymphs, and even the dazzling colours that seventeen centuries had left undimmed, attracted every artist and every connoisseur.

Of course, the Italian imagination hastened to discover an explanation and a history for the incomparable picture. Every day brought forth a new theory, but all lacked the essential character of probability.

The story of the mysterious fresco was not destined to everlasting secrecy, however. In 1836 one of the papyri, now so admirably deciphered by the system of Collini, on being opened, displayed to the astonished view the fresco in miniature at the top of the first part of the manuscript. The rest of the papyrus contained the present story, of which the fresco was undoubtedly an illustration—a story that we give with all the mutilations which the fragile nature of the half-calcined paper makes inevitable. The largest hiatus occurs just at the beginning; it still defies the erudition of all the Italian schools.

* * * * *

"Oh, Callias! I am weary of the world."

"You are mistaken, Sempronius; you are weary of everything except the world."

"I know what I am saying, Callias, and I am in earnest. But how can I make you believe anything—you, a sceptic by profession, an Athenian wit, a moth that flits from flower to flower through all the gardens of human folly—how can you believe in a profound distaste for all the earth contains? You are an epicurean animal."

"No, my melancholy philosopher, I am a true epicurean, tender in friendship and love for the pleasure there is in both. I am only cruel to my poor country-houses, and this hour my deepest perplexity is whether to go to-morrow to my villa on the Tiber, or pass my languid days in my grotto at Sunium, while this voluptuous, pestilential dog-star is in the ascendant."

The star Sirius flung its splendour along the Bay of Naples. The young Roman gazed passionately at the scene, and sighed, rather than said:

"Oh, that my mere wish could shake off the earth and send me soaring to the very empyrean!"

Here the slaves, coming to announce supper, cut short his comp'aint.

"I follow a different plan from you Romans," said the Greek, Callias, as they reclined at the table. As he spoke, he pointed with smiling satisfaction to the paintings that adorned the apartment. "You place your pictures in the strongest light and the most frequented room. I have mine in this place, never lighted except by the setting sun. I treat them like heart friends, only meeting them far from the day's tumult, and supping thus in their companionship."

Despite his soul-sickness, Sempronius looked and admired. His friend's fancy about lighting the paintings came out strangely as regarded one, a masterpiece by Alcamenes of Ionia. It was Olympus, the scene described by Homer where Venus in the assembly of the immortals comes to implore Jupiter to send victory to the Trojan arms. With the prodigality of luxury that sacrifices mounds of riches and treasures of genius to a moment's gratification, but that gratification supreme, the glorious work could be seen and comprehended just as the sun touched the horizon. The two friends prepared for the fleeting but supreme enjoyment as a pyramid of light slowly spread over the painting.

All the upper part was in darkness when the light first fell upon the rugged foot of the mountain. Then it crept up among the vines and olives of the slope. Then the region of the immortals was lapped in a golden air. The jewelled thrones of the different deities flashed. The moving ray seemed to impart life to the figures. In the centre was one last form seemingly veiled by a cloud, which appeared to melt under the glowing kiss of the growing light.

The form was Venus bending suppliant before the father of the gods. Her attitude was that of mingled nobility and meekness, but her face, her indescribable face, was love and nothing but love. Callias gave its charms the vain glance of a collector, but the young Sempronius gave a cry, buried his head in the folds of his robe, and flung himself down before the painting, panting with adoration.

When he rose day was done; the painting was enveloped in darkness, vanished as by enchantment.

* * * * *

"So you mean to wander over the world, chasing the nameless wonder of a dream? My young and ardent friend, take my advice, and leave such peregrinations to the geographers. Return to Rome; tell your excellent uncle that you are quite ready to marry his daughter's fortune; tell him that you are an obedient son, and have no idea of going counter to your worthy father's wishes. Then, having sacrificed to filial duty, and given a wedding that will be the talk of Rome for twenty-four hours, get on your helmet, if you still feel like travelling, and go and fight the Parthians, or eclipse the fame of Alexander—be buried in a mausoleum in India, in which later generations of barbarians will hang the crane above your illustrious bones."

Callias spoke mockingly, but a glance at his friend made him repent his jest.

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"I have confided to you alone the hopeless misery of my soul," cried the excitable Roman. "I have told you that the barbarous resolution of my family to bind me in a matter that, of all the affairs of life calls for the greatest liberty of choice, inspired me with a precocious aversion for the being to whom I was to sacrifice my reason, my heart, and my will. Our insane betrothal in childhood gave us each such an invincible hatred for the other, that we separated at once never to meet again."

"The resolve of two spoilt children," said Callias, this time taking pains to speak seriously. "Why should it control maturer years? Your cousin is no longer a child. She may be as lovely as Hebe and joyous as Flora. Have you never felt any curiosity about her since your terrible nursery divorce?"

"She?" cried Sempronius; "the instrument of my parents' tyranny? None whatever. I was sent to Greece to be educated. My career in the army threw me upon the frontiers of Pannonia. Since then I have lived in Asia Minor. I have never seen Rome; but a word will explain all I have seen," here Sempronius paused; "I have seen the being who will fill the void in my soul for ever. It was at a banquet given to the officers of the legion by the pro-consul Septimius, on our arrival at Ephesus. A sumptuous gala-day ended with a play given in the palace gardens, and acted by those dedicated to the service of the temple.

"The drama was like some of Ovid's, a fable on the power of love. The little god appeared under a hundred different forms—warrior, poet, musician, king, or travelling merchant with stores of jewels and rich stuffs, all to conquer the heart of a beautiful girl. And what a conquest she would have been, the one upon whom the young enchanter practised all his arts.

"I have never seen any one, never imagined anyone so beautiful. There, before me, lived and moved incarnate the Venus of the waves, or Pandora, stooping from Olympus. My fate was sealed for ever. The conviction pierced my soul, vividly as only truth's own shafts. I trembled in every limb, as the great magician of our passions spread every net, showed every lure to entrap this lovely woman. She resisted them all.

"But one stratagem remained. In the last scene of all, the quiet of a luxurious garden, a youth, in the garb of an Ionian shepherd, offered her neither pomp nor worldly glory, but just a heart brimming with love, faith and honour. If she had resisted then, she would have been more or less than mortal. She was neither; she was a woman—true as Nature, touched by the sweet impulse of Nature. I had triumphed in her resistance, now I triumphed in her submission. I saw with joy that her beauty was not the beauty of a statue. My face flushed as the rosy colour stole into hers. A tear fell from her eyes, my own were wet.

"With a sigh and a smile she admitted the power of the heart over the heart, and with silent tears of joy let herself fall upon the breast of the Ionian. Then, in a thunder-clap, the whole scene lifted like a flying cloud, and instead of the simple garden we saw the immortal meads of Idalia. The Ionian shepherd was Love himself, back in his first form; delightful, powerful, sportive, and kingly. The young god, wafted on his purple wings, flew to the arms of the fair mortal, and crowned her with amaranths in the presence of the nymphs, as a symbol of her metamorphosis into an immortal dweller in the grove of Love's Isle."

"And so," said Callias, with cold eyes, his satirical temperament leaving him untouched by emotion, "you have fallen in love with one of the dancers of the temple. The heart's ice melts readily under those good Asiatic skies; I fancy she will take very kindly to a second rehearsal with you in the *rôle* of the Ionian shepherd."

Sempronius's hand flew to his dagger.

"Evil Greek!" he cried; "the stars above us are not farther removed than my idol from the unhallowed breath of suspicion. I never saw her again. All my researches were in vain. Only your hateful mockery could cause you to forget that those priestesses are as sacred as the vestals of the Capitol. She was one of the maidens of the altar."

Callias soothed his friend's indignation.

"Why have you not attempted to find this mirror of perfection?" he asked. "Have you never offered to marry her?"

"Find her!" cried the Roman; "this is the second year I have spent in searching through Asia, Greece, and Italy, impelled by unconquerable hope. She has left the temple. I could almost believe that she has floated up to heaven. But if I found her, what could I do? My father, on his deathbed, left me the choice of his blessing or his curse, according as I did or did not marry my cousin, Euphrosyne. Wealth I can disdain, and tyranny despise; but I cannot trample on the dying commands of a father. His voice from the tomb summons me to obey."

"Then forget this other girl," said his amiable adviser.

The Roman slowly lifted his large black eyes filled with scorn.

"Forget her!" he cried, "I have no more power to forget her than to lose consciousness that I am alive. Everything compels me to remember her—music, light, stars, soft evening sounds, roses, the clouds, all that touches my heart means her and her only. You saw my agitation that evening at your villa. The Venus of that Olympus was the living idol of my thoughts. I would have given all I possess to have that picture and die. But even as I gazed the spirit of my father seemed to speak from the gathering gloom, and I fell forward in terror and dismay."

At that moment a slave entered to announce that a trireme from Rome had touched at Piræus, and had brought letters for both friends.

Callias retired to read his precious documents from the queen of cities, Sempronius fell into a reverie, fanned by the airs of a Grecian twilight.

While he gave the reins to his exalted imagination, Callias, having read his letters, returned with an air of mingled pleasure and pain.

"You are free," he said abruptly; "read this letter from your relative, Catullus. He says that your cousin, Euphrosyne, is dead. In the delirium of a malarial fever she flung herself into the Tiber. Her body was found a week before this letter started. Catullus describes the funeral ceremony most minutely, and is evidently very proud of having been invited to it."

* * * * *

"And now," said Callias, "for Ephesus."

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The night was gloriously beautiful; the trireme floated from the harbour, leaving a long furrow of light behind.

The two friends stood on the deck watching the shore-lights wane and the moon rise. The Parthenon stood out pale, solemn, and solitary against the sky. When a little temple on Sunium's marbled steep came in sight the sailors lighted up the shrine of Pallas Athene on the deck, and began their evening hymn to the tutelary

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goddess of Attica. This reminded Callias of supper, and he went below to order a repast worthy an imperial trireme, while Sempronius, wrapped in his military mantle, watched the flashing topaz constellation of Taurus overhead.

As the echoes of the hymn died away, a slender, rosy flame rose from the promontory, trembled a moment above the temple, and wavered up to heaven. The sailors fell upon their faces, and received the signal as the favourable response of the goddess. All felt that it was an auspicious augury for their voyage to Asiatic shores.

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The priest of Diana resisted all the eloquence of the two friends who insisted upon seeing the priestess of the sanctuary. Callias offered him a purse filled with Thracian gold. The hierophant had no sooner touched it than he flung it upon the ground as if stung by an asp, turned and fled. Sempronius, dismayed at seeing his last hope leaving him, ran after the priest and clutched at his robe. The hand that had been laid upon the incorruptible minister of Diana was adorned with a magnificent emerald. His eyes fastened upon it, he turned. The gem mysteriously glided upon his finger. Without a word he drew a key from beneath his purple robe and opening a low door, almost invisible in the massive carvings, noiselessly ushered the two friends into the depths of the temple.

The temple of Diana of Ephesus was the most celebrated place of devotion in the world. Callias was thrilled to find himself within its famous walls, from which kings were barred and which contained more treasures than many empires. The day's worship was done. The colossal bronze doors were closed upon the populace. All was night, silence and solitude.

The Roman, wrapped in his own thoughts, heard only the harps and flutes whose accords swelled from the distant halls.

The priest now turned into a deeper and more secret passage. Sempronius followed, but Callias drew him back. The pale light of a lamp showed that he had half drawn his sword, with an unmistakable expression. The Greek was evidently familiar with Asiatic faith. The place might be a mere pit where strangers were killed and robbed; Sempronius smiled as if the present and future were alike indifferent to him, and plunged into the darkness. The Greek paused, then wholly drawing his sword, slowly followed his ardent companion. The passage was long and tortuous: at last it ended in a descent, and the light wholly failed. They reached a small door. The priest's voice was heard whispering:

"You must wait here till I come."

With these words he disappeared.

"Now," said Callias, "we have only what we deserve, and we can give the world the warning of our stupendous folly; for that priest will think we have had quite enough glory already, without the addition of relating the marvels of our escape. What a shame that we didn't follow my impulse and make daylight shine through the fellow before he led us here to die like dogs."

Sempronius vowed the priest was honest. An hour passed, then another, and he did not return. Callias endeavoured to find his way back, but after a few random steps he found the passage obstructed by huge blocks of stone.

"The treachery is patent," he cried. "These are catacombs, and we shall join the other phantoms, and walk here for ever. Exquisite imbecility! Not to know that the priest would no more dare to betray the secrets of his temple than face a naked sword! But he certainly got out of the difficulty in the most superior manner. At present our occupation is reduced to wandering around here till we fall into some pit, or quietly doubling up on some of these stones to die of hunger!"

His friend's mind was naturally more elevated, purer, and already mounted higher.

"Callias," he said, "your injurious philosophy makes you distrust everything, even yourself. As for me, I have not so much that is attractive to me in the world, as to be reduced to despair by this trap. Of course, the priest is a rogue. I might have known that a man that sells himself for a ring would not hesitate to betray his corrupters. He has left us here to die, but death is a brave man's last resource. Stand up, and at least let us not yield our lives without a struggle."

The Greek had a noble soul. The cant of the man of the world fell from him. He grasped his friend's hand with genuine feeling. "Forward!" he cried. Sempronius went first; but the way was beset with momentarily increasing obstacles. At last it was impossible to take another step.

"Now," cried the Greek, in a tone of mingled irony and despair, "the experiment is complete. What is the use of breaking our bones in climbing over rocks that only take us nearer to the bowels of the earth? Come, take and hold this sword, and do me the last service of a Roman can for his best friend."

Sempronius took the sword in silence and broke it under his heel. The blade striking the stones made a few sparks, and by their fleeting light they perceived that they were in the midst of a huge crypt, whence branched several corridors in different directions. They entered upon the one which seemed to lead the farthest and end in the outer air.

"I am not a patient man, my friend," said Callias. "I will follow you once more, but if this only leads to more tombs I insist upon being allowed to rest from my labours in my own fashion."

"I only ask for another instant," cried the Roman firmly. "Afterwards you may be my guide to the everlasting sleep where the wretched forget and are forgotten."

As he finished speaking, a faint cry, followed by hurried footsteps, fell upon their ears. They paused. A ray of light trembled in the far recesses of the labyrinth, and both rushed towards it. The light struggled through the cracks of a narrow door. Sempronius looked, gave a cry, and rushed into the hall. A woman stood with pinioned arms before a lighted altar, whereon lay a knife. The priest who had betrayed the two friends, regarded the human victim with the fixed eye of cruelty.

A group of spectres with melancholy gaze and long murky garments, looked on at the deed of blood. When Sempronius appeared, the woman raised her eyes and rushed towards him. The priest seized the knife and endeavoured to plunge it into her breast, but the terrible blow was destined never to fall. Callias still held the fragment of his sword, and plunged it to the hilt in the body of the murderer. He fell with a groan, and expired at their feet. All the spectres drew swords. In a flash all was conflict, uproar, carnage.

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The trireme entered the Piræus, and Callias wished his friend to remain in Greece, but Sempronius, wounded in body, and broken-hearted, begged to be taken to Italy to die, and be buried with his ancestors. Callias forgot

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all his philosophy as he stood by the noble youth's bedside and heard him rave in the delirium of passion and despair.

"The victim stands by my couch each night," said the Roman, "addressing those monsters with compassionate words. I knew her at once in the labyrinth, changed and dishevelled as she was. She was the first, she will be the last love of my life. Tell me all you know about her; tell me once more, and yet again, that I may die hearing of her."

Callias would then spend an hour repeating that the fair priestess had chanced to see him at the pro-consul's banquet; had loved him with involuntary passion unknown to herself and to him; but finally her secret escaped her, and she was marked for the vengeance of the goddess as a recreant priestess. Her simple wish to leave the temple was an unpardonable crime. The vengeance of the divinity was considered incomplete unless the object of her love was also sacrificed; which explained the priest's willingness to introduce them to the shrine; he had trapped them to make them expiatory victims, and was reserving them for the sacred knife. After the combat in the sacrificial hall, they had been captured, thrown into a dungeon, delivered without knowing how, and seeking refuge in the palace of the pro-consul, the latter had hurried them out of Asia. The priestess had probably perished.

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Sempronius lay on a couch of ivory set with pearls; his curtains were of Persian silk; the silver statue of a nymph poured a slender stream of perfumed water from a crystal urn into a Parian basin; the floor of the room was strewn with roses. But the delicate profusion of patrician luxury was lost upon him. His thoughts were in Ephesus, in the cavern where he had seen that exquisite form of beauty trembling before the destruction of a fanatic's knife.

Callias abruptly entered, and asked in his usual tone, how the invalid was doing under the care of the new physician who had come to save him from his obstinacy and firm intention of dying.

Sempronius smiled sadly, and taking his friend's hand, said, in a voice full of feeling:

"Callias, I think I am as free as any one from superstition, but there is something more than human in this strange leech. Outlandish as his accent and Ethiopian countenance are, he has the gift of reading human nature with a resistless skill. He knows my thoughts, and is master of the secrets of nature. I almost tremble in his presence at the thought that I am in the hands of a being superior to my mortal faculties."

"Oh, he dabbles in magic, does he?" said Callias with disdain.

"I have no secrets from you, Callias," said Sempronius. "I have implored him to show me the vision of Ephesus once more before I die."

* * * * *

Sempronius entered the hall first. All was dark; but Callias carried a little lamp under a fold of his robe, and murmured:

"This is rather like our old adventure in the labyrinth; but I confess I have some curiosity to see how your Ethiopian who is such a master of magic, will manage his spirits."

As he spoke, a pale blue flame rose and settled in the centre of the ceiling. They then saw that they were in a vast circular hall. Sounds of instruments were softly audible near them, and seemed to issue from the ground beneath their feet. A vapour rose suddenly before their eyes, floating from right to left, over the walls of the apartment, and finally rested above their heads.

A voice that seemed to come from the depths of the cloud, asked them what they most wished to see.

Sempronius, trembling, pronounced the words: "The priestess of Ephesus."

Luscious music rolled through the air. One wall of the chamber seemed to disappear, and open on the sea at sunset.

"The Piræus!" cried Callias, and pointed to the trireme outward bound.

The scene changed to Ionia and the burning skies of Asia. Two manly figures, a Greek and an Italian, appeared under the cypresses that ring the temple of Diana. A third figure joined them, led them away, and all were lost in darkness.

A line of light now crept along the ground, and the two spectators recognised the vaults where they had been deserted by the priest; soon a distant hall appeared, the victim, the priest, and the circle of attendants.

Sempronius gave a cry as the beautiful victim knelt for mercy. He tried to spring towards her, but was held back by his friend, and fell fainting in his arms.

When he opened his eyes the scene was changed; a green and flowery garden spread the luxuriance of Oriental vegetation before his eyes. The landscape was animated by living figures; a group of nymphs were dancing to the sound of instruments they held in their hands, and when the circle parted, a throne of moss and flowers were seen. On the throne sat a young queen in rustic garb, her eyes bent upon the ground, while a young Love whispered his enchantments in her ear; the scene at the pro-consul's banquet appeared a second time before the astonished eyes of Sempronius.

His impulse was irresistible; he sprang towards the vision; but this time it was not a sprite of air. A woman, a real woman, sighing, blushing, beautiful, fell into his arms, agitated and tearful! The prietess, the magician, and Euphrosyne were the same person!

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"Gaze on my happiness, incredulous one!" said Sempronius, with an adoring look at his wife, who held their fair child in her arms.

"The event seems to argue that there is such a thing," said the Greek, "but I will say this: Find me a girl, cousin, whom I shall first hate without knowing; who shall love me with a romantic affection, as Euphrosyne loved you, without even knowing whether you were worth a sigh; who shall flee from her country and pass as dead in order to give me complete liberty to play the fool to my heart's content; who shall become a priestess, and after saving me from the claws of a villainous confederacy of murderous monks, shall open the doors of my prison, follow me across the sea, sacrifice for me her woman's vanity sufficiently to masquerade as a negress and a witch, in order to save me; who shall be a thousand times a greater witch by the power of her eyes, who shall throw herself into my arms, and then——"

"Then," said Sempronius, his eyes sparkling with joy, "then, like me, you will marry the idol of your heart."

"Yes, yes, charming, I'm sure," said Callias, setting his mouth with a comically grave air, "but as she was your betrothed in the first place, why, in the name of Love and Venus, put yourself to so much trouble?"

Peter Parr.

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MARTHA.

"Sit down, ma'am," said the hotel-keeper's mother, placing a chair. "The 'bus will be here in a minute, and a couple is going to start from my house—a young married couple. You'll be surprised when you sees 'em, for as far as looks go—well, he's as handsome as he can be and she is as plain as a stone fence. He's educated—college graduate. She has a plain, country school education, that is all; but she's good. Yes, she is good. And now that she is so happy she has a sort of different expression.

"She was born here, Martha Hill was, and she got a sewing-machine when she was twelve years old. My husband kept his hotel then. He was a kind man, and he thought a good deal of Martha. So, seeing the girl so clever we had her come and live with us.

"So she came and had a little room that was handy to the dining-room. Martha was the most industrious young girl I ever saw. Plain girls somehow are apt to do more than pretty ones. Perhaps they don't look in the glass so much.

"Well, Martha grew up, and, as far as I know, she never had a sweetheart. Girls not half so good as she was got married, and she made their dresses, but Martha stayed single.

"She was neat and trim, and you'd have thought someone would have seen what a good wife she'd make; but the men think more of a pretty face than anything else. And I had made up my mind Martha would never marry, when in the middle of summer Mr. Willard, a young widower, brought his little boy here to board. He came out himself every Saturday, and stayed over a Sunday.

"Martha took to the little boy from the first. He was always with her, and I never knew how fond she was of children before, and I never heard her talk so much to anyone as she talked to Mr. Willard, mostly about the boy.

"Poor Martha! I used to think; if you were pretty he might take a fancy to you, but he's not the man to marry a plain woman, even if he would give up style and fashion.

"But I saw that Martha had a heart in her bosom, like other women, and mine ached for her. And so it went on for two or three years. Every June the little boy was brought down, and he wrote to Martha in the winter, and she was so pleased to get the letters.

"This summer he came as usual and stayed longer. The autumn was well over before his father spoke of taking him away, and old Mrs. Rapps, who finds out everything somehow, told us the child was likely to have a step-mother.

"Mr. Willard was paying attention to a pretty young heiress, and she seemed to fancy him.

"Martha heard the talk. Next morning her eyes were red. She said she sewed too late. I knew she'd been crying, but I said nothing. What good does it ever do to talk?

"Well, Martha was going to make Miss Potter's wedding-dress that day—to finish—and she said she might be late. But it wasn't far to the Potters, and their Jim would see her home, so she went off.

That night a stupid girl I had put the boy—Kenyon his name was—to bed, and it seems he asked for a candle, and she left one lighted.

"I suppose the wind blew the curtains into the flames; but, at all events, while Isaac was in the stable feeding the horses, he saw a queer light and looked up. The house was on fire.

"You know what a fright fire puts people into. We lost our heads entirely. I remembered the child first, but when I got upstairs the hall was in flames, and I, in a muslin dress, could do nothing. I ran down, calling for a ladder. We had lent all ours to a neighbour who was painting. And while one ran one way and one another, we heard a scream, and saw Martha Hill come running up the road.

"'The child!' she cried.

"'There!' I said. 'And the stairs are on fire, and the ladder's gone.'

"She screamed no more. In a minute she had her gown off and stood in her woollen skirt, and then up she went, up the big wisteria vine that my father had planted fifteen years before to shade the porch, and that had grown big and strong, with branches like a tree, in that time.

"The zinc wire was firm, and the vine held. Martha was a light weight. Up she went. Up! up! up! We heard the little engine coming from the village, and the neighbours shouting; but she was in at the window before they came in sight.

"'She's gone to her death,' said I, but the next instant she was out again.

"The child was on her back, its arms about her neck, its head covered with a woollen shawl, and as she went up so Martha came down again.

"We took her in our arms. The child was not hurt. The woollen wrap was scorched, that was all. But Martha's hair was singed, her woollen skirts in tinder, and her hands lacerated by the wires and splintered branches.

"'I've saved him,' she said, 'and I am willing to die.'

"And then she fainted.

"I put her into bed, and the doctor looked at her. He thought she would be very ill, but, somehow, she was not. Her burns were slight, and when they cut her hair, it curled up about her face, and looked prettier than the smooth bands she used to wear; and I sat down and wrote to Mr. Willard, telling him the story. He came down at once.

"She was sitting in the easy-chair in the parlour when he came, and he went in, holding little Kenyon by the hand. I did not follow. I sat here and went on knitting.

"I don't know what they said, but in about an hour Mr. Willard came out. He led the child straight up to me.

"'Tell Mrs. Ashton, Kenyon,' he said, and the little fellow threw his arms about my neck.

"'Martha is going to be my mamma,' he said.

"I looked at Mr. Willard, and he held out his hand.

"'I will try to make her happy,' he said.

"They were married yesterday, and they are going away to-day. Here comes the 'bus."

The 'bus came. I sat opposite the young couple for many miles.

Such a happy face as Martha's could not look plain, and I am sure her husband loves her.

B. S. K.

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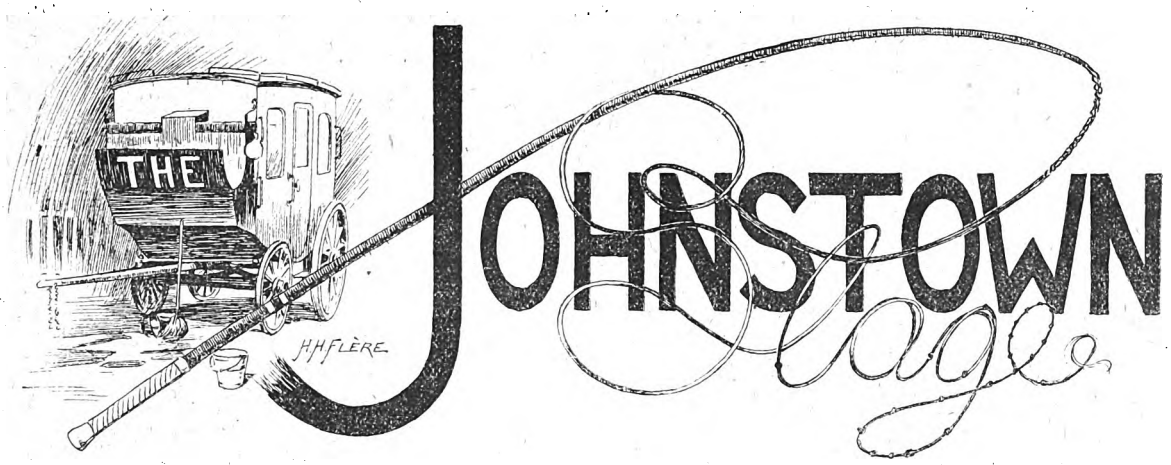

THE Johnstown stage was due at City of Rocks at five o'clock. About that hour a man in a flannel shirt, dirty soldier-trousers tucked in his boots, and a slouch hat on the back of his bronzed, bearded, unkempt head, materialised in the obscurity of the doorway of the station-house, and shading his eyes with his hand, looked down the road. As he stood there, a cloud of dust became visible in the distance. It floated and wavered nearer and nearer, until the creaking and jingling of dry wood, leather, and metal, and the pounding of hoofs, were heard.

Then, as the cloud approached the station, an apparition of two horses and a stage-coach was seen within it. The cloud stopped in front of the house, the dust settled, and the coach, coated inside and out with the white powder, was disclosed. The driver, looking like a miller, laid his whip on the roof and prepared to descend. The station-keeper, who, meanwhile had stepped out into the road and silently commenced to unhook the traces, looked up for the first time.

The next moment he dropped the trace with an exclamation of wonder, while his hand slowly but instinctively sought the revolver which hung in a belt loosely about his hips. For a few seconds he scrutinised the face of the man who was swinging himself down from the box, and then his look of surprise changed to one of recognition, his hand relaxed its hold on the pistol, and he said heartily: "Well, I'll be durned! Lieutenant is that you? Why, what's come of Jim?"

"He was taken sick down by Shot-gun Creek, and had to lay off at the milk-ranch," said the man addressed, taking off his hat and beating out the dust against his leg. He was tall and broad-shouldered, but slender, and was dressed in the same manner as the station-keeper, even to the revolver which hung about his hips. His voice and bearing, however, the only characteristics unaffected by the dust, betrayed a difference between them.

"Sick, nothing!" exclaimed the ostler, in a tone of disgust, taking out the straw which he held between his teeth, and throwing it energetically on the ground. "That fellow's al'ays sick! I'm durned ef I don't believe he's weakened sence Whistling Dick jumped his stage last month! He's yeard that the paymaster's sending his money up by express this trip, to pay off the boys at the fort, and he's afeard he'll git jumped agin, durn him! That's w'at's the matter. It leaves me in a purty fix!" he continued. "Frank's out after stock, and there's no one yere but me. Who's goin' to take the stage on?"

"I'll take it on as far as Pack City, if you like," said the lieutenant. "The old man will find someone there to take Jim's place easy enough."

The station-keeper, without replying, mechanically resumed his duties of taking out the horses, and watched them meditatively as they walked off to the stables. Then, finally turning to the lieutenant, with the air of one whose mind is made up, he said: "By thunder, I guess that's the only thing we *kin* do. I can't leave yere. I wouldn't have a head of stock left by the time I got back. Them Injuns is gittin' worse and worse, not to mention the hoss-thieves and road-agents that's gittin' thicker'n fleas on a dog's back. It's sort o' crowdin' you, though, lieutenant, and I don't know what the old man'll say."

"He won't say thank you, at any rate," said the lieutenant.

"You kin gamble on that," said the ostler approvingly. "Who's this Johnny-come-lately?" he added, as a passenger from the inside of the coach strolled towards them.

"Jim said he was a stock-man," said the lieutenant "he's billed for Pack City."

"Jim!" growled the ostler contemptuously. "Jim's a stranger himself in these parts. How should he know?"

And when the traveller, an elderly man, joined them with a sociable remark that "it was purty tol'able warm," the ostler vented his scorn for Jim by ignoring him altogether and continuing his talk with the lieutenant about way-bills, express, mail, and other stage matters. But the passenger appearing in nowise affected by this lack of cordiality held his ground, and if he did not join in the conversation, listened to it so persistently that the ostler finally turned to him, and said rather sarcastically: "Stranger, is there anything I can do for you?"

"Well, no, pard," replied the traveller good-humouredly, "there's nothin' you kin do fer me, but I reckon you kin do somethin' fer thet lady inside, she's petered plumb out, and the kid's yelling like all possessed."

At this the amateur driver walked over to the stage-door and looked in. There was the usual litter of mail-bags, and small bundles, and smell of dust and leather.

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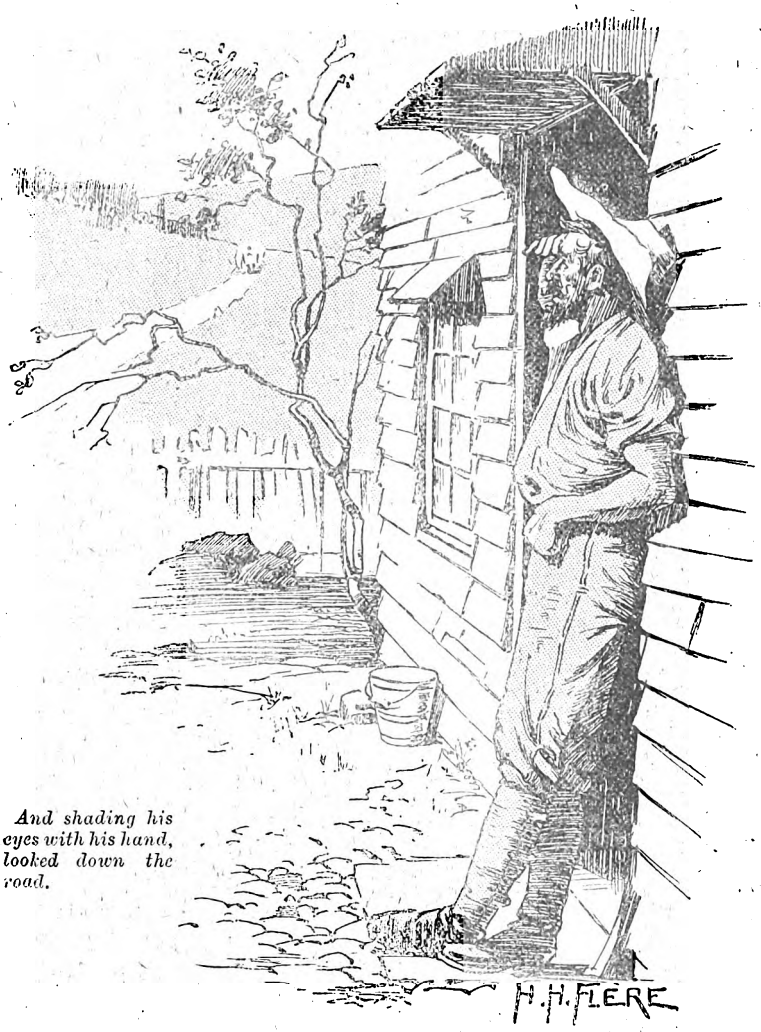

And shading his eyes with his hand, looked down the road.

Addressing the woman, who, in a long linen cloak, and with a veil over her face, reclined limply in one corner, half holding a crying baby, the lieutenant said: "Supper station, madam."

This announcement producing no reply, he repeated it in a louder tone. The only result was an added force to the baby's cries.

"I reckon she's fainted," said the other passenger, appearing at his elbow with a cup of water, "try this yere."

The lieutenant got inside, followed by the old man, to whom he unceremoniously handed the baby. Taking out his pocket-flask he mixed a little whisky and water, and pushing the veil up from the unconscious mouth, he succeeded in partially reviving the exhausted woman. "Now then," he said, in an authoritative tone, "you must come outside in the open air, and wash your face and hands; that will brace you up quicker than anything. Then when you have had some dinner you will be all right. We haven't much time," he added.

The woman obediently arose, but, cramped and worn out by the long day's ride, had to be assisted to the ground. She succeeded in walking over to the water-trough, and sitting down on its edge, silently took her baby. The lieutenant brought her a basin and towel and left her to her toilet. Presently he returned and, said: "Supper is ready."

"Thank you, I don't want any supper," was the reply.

As he heard her speak for the first time, the lieutenant looked at the shrouded form with surprise. The voice was low and trained, the voice of a gentlewoman. It startled him with a swift suggestion of perfumed lace and six-button kid gloves, of waltz music, yachting, and low murmured words in dim conservatories. The recollection of the fried pork and beans awaiting them in the station, however, brought his mind back to the subject.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but you must eat something. You can't stage all day without eating."

Her back was turned towards him as she sat dabbling her hand in the water for the amusement of the baby, and he went round and stood in front of her to emphasise his remark. Her veil was still down, and she did not raise her head as she replied, in the even tones of a superior addressing an over-zealous inferior: "You are very kind, but I don't want anything."

The lieutenant was rather nettled at this, but, nevertheless, persisted. His interest was awakened. Besides, it would be very inconvenient to have her faint on the road. "I hope you won't think me obtrusive," he said, modulating his tone respectfully, "but you must have something. If you would prefer it, I will bring it out here."

Then she looked up half-resentfully, half-curiously, evidently thinking that this was a very odd stage-driver. At last she said: "You are giving yourself needless trouble, but as you insist upon it, I will take a cup of tea and a little milk for baby."

If her purpose was to rid herself of his importunities, her request was very effective. Tea! Milk! The lieutenant returned to the station-house thoughtfully pulling his moustache.

"Now," he said to himself, "that is like a woman! Why couldn't she ask for oysters and champagne or something reasonable—but *tea! milk!*"

"Nate," he said doubtfully to the ostler, "you don't happen to have such a thing as—as *tea* about the house, do you?"

"Why not?" replied the station-keeper promptly.

"Oh, I don't mean any sage-brush wash," rejoined the lieutenant impatiently, "I'm talking about shop tea."

"Well that's what I'm talking about," said Nate; "a Chinaman gave some to Frank the other day."

"Nate," said the lieutenant, drawing out his flask, "take a drink!"

And in a few minutes he was carrying out a cup of tea and some biscuits, unconscious of the elaborate wink with which Nate, restored somewhat to good humour by the unexpected drink, favoured the elderly passenger.

The lieutenant found the object of his solicitude as

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he had left her, enduring the discomfort of her condition with silent patience.

"You are very good," she said more gently, but in the same even tone of a superior. Evidently this woman was accustomed to being waited on.

"I suppose that condensed milk will do for the baby?" said the lieutenant. "Have you anything to put it in?"

Yes, certainly, the baby had a bottle. But, alas! a search for the bottle revealed the fact that it must have been jolted out of the stage while the mother was unconscious.

"What shall I do!" she exclaimed, her fortitude suddenly forsaking her. "He won't drink out of a cup, and I am afraid he is hungry now." Evidently tears were gathering behind the veil, tears that she never would have shed for herself.

"Oh, I can fix that easy enough," said the stage-driver consolingly.

Quickly entering the house once more, for time was getting precious, and the beans were getting cold, he seized an empty beer-bottle, washed it out, filled it with a hot mixture of condensed milk, drove the cork in tight, pared the cork down to a convenient size, and pierced it with a saddler's awl; then, tearing a piece of linen from his handkerchief, he padded the cork and tied it securely.

"There," he said to the disconsolate mother, "I think that will work. I once raised a litter of puppies on no better one."

The lady, who had smiled rather hopelessly at this cumbrous device, anxiously watched the infant's attempts to manage it. The lieutenant, notwithstanding that the beans were getting cold, looked on with almost as much interest. An expression of contentment gradually stole over the baby's face. Evidently the bottle met with its entire approval. Then the mother gave the child a quick, delighted hug, and with a little, low laugh of relief, turned her veiled face to the driver and said, but this time her voice trembled: "You are so kind! How can I thank you!"

But he only replied with an amused smile, and instinctively, though carelessly, lifting his hat, he went back to his supper of cold pork and beans, while the eyes behind the veil followed him with a look of increasing surprise and curiosity.

The stage, when it left City of Rocks, was twenty minutes late. But the jack-rabbits, which laid back their ears and scudded at its approach, found it no mean rival that afternoon.

"I'll bet ten dollars he makes it up afore he gets to Stoney Creek, and not turn a hair!" said the station-keeper to himself. Then, after a further contemplation of the fast receding cloud of dust, he added in a more reckless tone: "I'll bet ten dollars he makes it up afore he gets to Dick Day's ranche, and not turn a hair!" As no one accepted either of these generous propositions, he shook his head and remarked confidentially: "There ain't many kin copper the lieutenant, now, if you year me!" and, disappearing in the gloom of the interior of the house, City of Rocks was left once more to the hot silence of its fantastic stones.

* * * * *

The sun was setting behind Bald Butte as the Johnstown stage approached the five-mile grade which led down to Stoney Creek. The air was growing cool. The rabbits, looking like sage-bushes in motion, flitted about in the twilight. A colony of prairie owls, posing themselves at intervals along the road, accompanied the intruding vehicle through their territory, the head of the line rising as the stage drew near, and gravely flying down to the station at the foot until, the danger departed, they solemnly withdrew.

Down the grade the stage went, with the driver on the brake and the horses trotting loosely in their harness, until, with a final jolt and lurch, they fetched up on the bank of Stoney Creek. The driver swung himself off the box, and taking an iron pail out of the boot, proceeded to water his horses. The elderly passenger emerged from the stage with a tin cup, and scooping up some of the bright, cold water from the noisy mountain stream, gallantly took it to the lady inside. Then, helping himself, he said to the driver, with a laugh:

"I jedge you've been making up time. Ye herded 'em along pretty lively down that grade."

The lieutenant nodded his head. The position in which he found himself had responsibilities that discouraged sociability. Going to the other side of the stage he got out his overcoat and put it on. It was a garment made of rough, blue cloth, long and voluminous, with a cape that came to the waist. Quietly slipping his revolver from its holster, he put it in a narrow pocket in the lining of the coat. This pocket, apparently made for the purpose, dispensed with the ostentatious and cumbrous method of belting the pistol on outside. These preparations for the night completed, he mounted to his place, and made the usual, warning inquiry: "All set?"

"If you don't mind, pard," said the passenger, "I'll ride outside for a ways, and give the lady a chance to stretch."

Evidently the bottle met with its entire approval.

"I don't mind," said the lieutenant, and the elderly

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stranger climbed laboriously to his side. The horses' hoofs splashed and the stage wheels crunched their way through the stream, while the water fretted and foamed noisily about the wet fetlocks and through the cleaned spokes. Then hoofs and wheels came out on the soft bank, and the stage sped silently along the damp bottom land. Dark forms shaped themselves into cottonwood trees and alder bushes, and dissolved again into the darkness, while the fresh odour of the earth and growing things scented the night air.

"Have a drink?" said the passenger sociably, drawing out a bottle.

"No, thank you," said the lieutenant, "I don't drink on the box."

"Right you are!" said his companion; "well, here's luck! You h'aint ben long on the line, I take it?"

"No," said the lieutenant.

"I was up in this section a couple o' years ago," continued the passenger, "and I kinder thought I didn't rec'lect your face. It's a fine country up yere, but it ain't as fine a country as some I've seen. Was you ever up round Sin-e-ah-qua-teen?"

No, the lieutenant had never been to Sin-e-ah-qua-teen.

"You don't happen to be married, do you?"

"No," said the lieutenant, beginning to be amused and entertained by his companion, "I am not married."

The stage had commenced to ascend the grade on the other side of Stoney Creek. The road wound up through a cañon, or gulch, in the bottom of which was the dry bed of a winter torrent. It was a long, tedious pull to the top of the mesa, and the horses had to take their time to do it. Notwithstanding that a thin line of light on the brow of a distant mountain signalled that the moon had risen, it was very dark in the cañon; so dark that although the lieutenant kept peering ahead of the horses, he could see but little more than a bend of the winding road faintly defined by the denser obscurity on each side of it. The passenger himself, notwithstanding his steady flow of talk, seemed affected by the surrounding gloom, and maintained an alert gaze on the side of the road.

"You see," he continued, "I had a wife myself once, so I know something about women. I picked her up in 'Frisco, and jest about six months after I lost 35,000 dollars in the Frazer River excitement. Then I came up yere, and laid out a ranch on Mud River. But my wife, she got sick, and I spent all the money I had left in taking her down again, and in doctoring. Well, sir, when she died, and I came back yere with the little fellows, I found my ranch gone plumb. Six inches of snow on the ground, and the little fellows barefoot, and not a dollar in my pocket, and nothing to eat. I was blue. I tell you, pard, if ever a man were blue I was that man! I jest tuk off my hat and throwed it on the ground, and looked all around. But I didn't throw up no sponge. I tuk to splitting rails, and inside of a month I sold 'em to the guv'ment at the Sahatlin Agency, and cleaned up a hundred dollars. I'm doin' tol'able well now, the country round my way's gittin' settled up. I got my eye on some of these yere immigrants, and I'll pick another wife some day, a young 'un about sixteen, that I kin larn. I'm purty good on the physiog. I don't want no widows, they're larnt all ready to yer hand, but they know too much."

"Hold up your hands, ieutenant.'

The lieutenant laughed, and spoke to his horses, which were showing a restive disinclination to proceed. They were almost at the top of the grade now. A clump of scrub-oaks at the head of the cañon was in sight. The shadows here were very dense by contrast with the moonlight, which lay in the open beyond. It was at these shadows that the horses were pricking their ears. The lieutenant cracked his whip over the unruly animals, but as he did so, he looked sharply in the direction of the oaks. Was not something moving there? Or was it the moonlight shadows playing their usual tricks on highly strung nerves?

Then he remembered that there was a spring under those oaks, and that cattle were always round it; or, perhaps a stray deer from the mountains might have come there to drink. His military training and frontier experience made him guard against unreasoning alarm.

At the same time, the station-keeper's open secret that the paymaster's funds were aboard, flashed across his mind. It would never do for him, an army officer, to hand down Wells-Fargo's box to the first road-agent who asked for it. Professional pride, if naught else, forbade it. He said nothing to the man at his side, but under cover of his cape he slipped the reins and whip into his left hand, and with his right cocked the

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revolver in his pocket. The elderly passenger, notwithstanding that his eyes were also fastened on the clump of oaks, seemed quite unsuspicious, and continued to talk.

"I reckon I can get another wife easy enough. I know a fellow that came in to that section only a little while ago, without a dollar, and he married a right purty girl, only sixteen, and he's older than——"

A shrill whistle suddenly startled the silence of the night. The passenger on the box, almost without a pause, leant over, and laying one hand on the reins with the other pointed a pistol at the driver's head, and said, but no longer in the accents of an uneducated person:

"Hold up your hands, lieutenant!" At the same instant a man with a masked face and holding a gun appeared in the middle of the road and stopped the horses.

They galloped out over the prairie.

The lieutenant turned pale and stared in amazement at the man by his side.

"It's no use," said the elderly passenger sternly. "We've got the drop on you! Be quick, or I'll——"

"Well," said the lieutenant defeatedly, "you have got the drop on me, for a fact!" And, drawing a long breath, he slowly raised his arms. But when his left elbow was as high as his shoulder, with his right hand he pressed the trigger of the revolver in his pocket.

There was a muffled report, a shriek, followed by another report, then another, and another, confused and intermingled, the sharp crack of the rifle ringing out over the duller noise of the pistols. When the sounds ceased the man in the road was crawling on his hands and knees towards the shadow of the oaks whence he had emerged. There was no one on the box but the lieutenant, and he was standing erect. The next moment he pitched head first over the dash-board on to the off-horse's back, and from there rolled on to the road. It needed but this to goad the frightened animals into a stampede, and with the reins under their heels, kicking and shying, they galloped out over the prairie.

It is not easy for two horses to run away with a Concord coach, especially after coming up Stoney Creek grade. And so, after the stage had lumbered and lurched at their heels for a half-mile or so, the horses came down to a trot, and then to a walk, and finally stood still, and gazed around, trembling, and ready for a second flight. The moment that the vehicle stopped, the veiled face of the lady passenger appeared at the door, and her terror-stricken voice cried, but almost inaudibly: "My God! what has happened?"

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Aroused from a troubled sleep by the report of a pistol, followed by a man's shriek, more shots and groans, she had opened her eyes just in time to see a heavy body fall over the wheel and on to the ground.

Then the stage had started forward, the wheel going over the thing on the ground with a sickening jolt. As the stage bounded on she had been thrown violently to and fro, clinging convulsively to her baby, unable to realise what this grisly horror of the night might be. With shaking hands, she now unfastened the door, and stepping out, found herself alone in the awful silence and solitude of the night.

Hark! what was that? She tore her veil from her head, and with it came her hat. Great masses of black hair fell down her shoulders, and a white, young face shone out in the moonlight lovely even in its terror. The noise was but the piping of an insect, but it sounded like a distant shriek. Then the wind stirred the dry buffalo grass, and it seemed to the panic-stricken woman as though it was the voices of men pursuing. Her hair arose, and all the blood in her body rallied in her heart. She would have fainted had it not been for the wailing of the dependent baby in her arms. What should she do? Her first impulse was to run from what might be behind her. But her feeble limbs failed at the sight of the wide plains and obstructing sage-brush. If she could but get upon the stage and drive.

She went to the horses and spoke to them. One of them whinnied in reply, and that encouraged her. She crept between them, talking to them all the time in trembling, beseeching tones, and got the reins out from beneath their hoofs. Then holding the reins and the baby in one arm, she scrambled on to the wheel, and from there to the driver's seat. Everything was so big, the reins, the seat, the break, her little feet did not reach the dash-board, but rested on some sacks of barley that filled the forward boot. In this barley she made a nest for the baby. When she was ready to start, it was evident that she was not ignorant of driving. She held the reins and whip like the amateur drivers of the coaching clubs. The horses had been restive during these preparations, and started off freely at her word.

And now the distraction of driving and the sense of motion diminished her first ghastly horror, and replaced it with nervous excitement. She had no difficulty in finding the road, the horses took her back to it. When she reached it, however, she stopped to look round, and determine which way led to Pack City. It would be frightful to make a mistake, and drive back into that awful tragedy. She thought, with a shudder, of what might be there, dead or living, in the moonlit road or in the blackness of the bushes. She wondered what had become of the driver. Was it his body that she had seen fall from the stage? He must be either dead or wounded; perhaps he was only wounded. She would send back help instantly from Pack City.

But when she decided on the direction she still hesitated. The recollection of that tall, broad-shouldered young driver, who had been so kind and courteous to her, persisted in obtruding itself on her mind. Perhaps if he was only wounded he might be dying now for want of a little help. He had helped her in her need, he had helped her baby. In common humanity ought she not to go back to his assistance? Was it not cowardly to take the stage and desert him? Longing to go the other way, and weeping hysterically, she finally turned the reluctant horses towards the cañon.

The moon had lit up the vicinity of the scrub oaks by the time the stage moved slowly back on the scene. All was silent and deserted. Suddenly the horses snorted and shied at a mass of blue cloth lying in the road. The woman turned the team to one side and drove it against some trees. Then, taking her baby in her arms, she crept down from her perch and, starting at every sound, stole her way to the prostrate form. It was the driver's face which she uncovered, as ghastly white as her own and smirched with blood and dust. Then she slipped her hand under his coat and laid it over his heart. It was still beating. Hurriedly she searched his pockets for the flask that he had used in her service but a few hours before; it was her turn now. She lifted his head and poured the raw whisky generously down his throat. He responded with a groan and a gasp that frightened her anew, and then struggled to a sitting posture.

"Water!" he cried, "for God's sake, water!" Then, as she hesitated, he continued faintly: "My hat. There's a spring over there," and lay down with another groan.

Her fear was dispelled by the sound of his voice. She found the spring, and, filling his hat, let him drink, and bathed his face and head. He revived at this treatment, and, again sitting up, took out his knife and asked her to cut his sleeve off. "I am losing blood terribly from my arm," he explained. She bravely but tremblingly did as she was told. When she had cut away the soaked cloth, and bared the massive arm, he helped her to improvise a tourniquet with his handkerchief and a piece of stick, and the bleeding was stopped. After a second dose of whisky and water he commenced to improve rapidly. She bound another cloth round his head. "The fellow with the rifle did that," he said. "That is what knocked me off the box. It is only a graze, but it was a mighty close call." Then he struggled to his feet, and, looking round, saw the stage. "They didn't get the box, did they?" he cried eagerly.

"I don't know," she said, taking up her baby. "I don't think so. The horses ran away."

"The horses ran away!" he said, staring wonderingly for the first time at the pretty, white face that was raised to his. "Well, but—why—how did the stage get back here?"

"I brought it back," she replied, lowering her head under his persistent gaze.

"You brought it back!" he exclaimed, "*you!*"

For a few minutes the wounded lieutenant looked down at the slight form of the woman who stood before him in the moonlight, veiled in her own long black hair. Then, as he realised what she had done, he took off his hat and dropped it in the road, having but one available arm, and offered her his hand. She placed hers frankly within it, and he raised the little gauntlet respectfully to his lips. "You are very brave," he said, with considerable feeling; "I am glad to think that perhaps I owe you my life."

The Johnstown stage was later than ever that night when it drew up in front of Abe Goldstein's store, in Pack City. Simultaneously with its arrival the drinking and gambling saloons and other places of public resort suddenly became deserted. It was said that a woman had driven the stage in, and that a man with his head bandaged and his arm in a sling was sitting beside her, holding a baby. While Wells-Fargo's box and the mail-sacks were being taken out (for Goldstein's store was also the express and post-office), the story was briefly given to the crowd. Then a cheering, pistol-firing procession accompanied the stage down the street to the hotel. Here a dozen strong arms fairly lifted the woman from the box, while the baby was only rescued from its mob of volunteer bearded nurses by

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the energetic intervention of the muscular landlady. The lieutenant himself, after being enthusiastically asked to drink in the aggregate liquor enough to have stocked a wholesale whisky store, was put to bed, and a message dispatched for the surgeon at the fort.

Meantime a little party of horsemen swiftly and silently rode out of the town in the direction whence the stage had come. The next day the lieutenant was informed that Whistling Dick had been found dead in the road at the head of Stoney Creek grade. A false grey beard had been picked up near the body, and was thoughtfully offered to the lieutenant as a memento. "We struck the other fellow's trail in that clump of scrub-oak," said his informant. "He was wounded, and there wasn't any trouble in following it. We finally corraled him down in Stoney Creek. But he was game, and played that gun of his for all it was worth before we took him in. You never would have guessed, now, that it was Jim Gatesby himself, the company's new driver. But that's who it was, for a fact. I've heard since that the express folks kind of suspicioned him of standing in on that last robbery."

* * * * *

One year has passed. Again the silent City of Rocks has lost its sharp outlines in the shimmering heat of a July afternoon. On the bench outside of the stage-house door, Nate, the station-keeper, is sitting, reading a month-old newspaper. On the edge of the water-trough opposite him, Frank, the helper, is mending a horse-collar. Presently Nate threw down the paper and said: "Well, I'll be durned!" Frank looked up inquiringly. Nate, rolling a cigarette from a piece of brown wrapping-paper, continued: "Ye rec'lect the old gen'lman from the States wot went up the line about two months after Lieutenant Calverly laid out Whistling Dick and that smarty of a Jim Gatesby?"

Frank nodded his head. He was a man of few words.

"Ye rec'lect how many questions he asked about that little rumpus? Specially 'bout the lady with the kid who showed such a heap of sand? That old gen'lman was her father."

"I knowed that," said Frank, in a tone that resented having his interest excited to no purpose.

"Of course ye knowed it," replied Nate calmly. "Didn't he perk up his head like a grass-fed cayuse and tell ye so when he brought her down the line ag'n about two weeks afterwards? Of course ye knowed it. Didn't he tell every mother's son all along the line that it was his daughter? Why, when he went out to the Sahatlin Agency and got her to give up teachin' the Injuns' kids and go back with him, they tell me that he set up the drinks fer the whole durned town. But ye didn't year how it was that the lady ever come out into this country to teach *siwashes*, did ye? No! Well, then, the way of it was this. She bucked agin the old man in gittin' married. She 'lowed her jedgment laid over his, but it didn't pan out worth a durn. Her husband was no good, and when he found her father wasn't going to chip in to 'em along, he went back on her.

"But she didn't go nosin' round the old man to be tuk back. That warn't her style. She just got an appointment as school-teacher out yere, which was 'bout as fur away as she could git. But she hadn't no more'n gone when her husband passed his checks in a railway smash-up. Well, the old man didn't know where she were, till one day he came across a newspaper telling 'bout the stage bein' jumped out yere. Then he got on to her trail, and followed her up and tuk her home. P'raps ye rec'lect that about two months afterwards the lieutenant went back to the States. Nat'rally. Well, I'm a sluice-robber ef him and she ain't got married! Yes, sir, yere it is in the paper. They say the old man's richer than Blue Gulch, and give 'em a couple of hundred thousand to start on. And wot's more, among the wedding presents they got was a solid silver tea-set with a 'scription on it, as how it was presented to Lieutenant and Mrs. George W. Calverly, by Wells, Fargo, and Company's express, 'in grateful remembrance of their gallant defence of the Johnstown stage.'"

R. Fletcher.

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By Winifred Graham. *Author of "Through the Valley," "Six First-Class Passengers," etc.*

CHAPTER XVII.

Oh, Love! in Such a Wilderness as This.

Eleanor grows very fond of Elizabeth Kachin and her dusky son. Since she rescued him that day from the trap Tombo thinks there is no one like the beautiful Mrs. Quinton.

Big Tombo, his father, an educated man who has spent many years of his life in England, also looks upon Eleanor with the same reverence and admiration as little Tombo.

Carol makes fun of the sandy-haired woman wedded to a native, and laughs at Eleanor for being friends with her.

"I have not so many friends that I can afford to pick or choose," she says simply to Quinton, who is smoking in the verandah, his legs crossed, and a graceful air of abandon in his attitude.

She looks lovingly at his long, slim foot, remembering how it attracted her in old days.

"No, darling; I am afraid you must be getting bored to death in this beastly slow place."

A look of alarm steals over Eleanor's features. The distress in her voice is evident as she replies:

"Oh, no, Carol—are you?"

"I have plenty of sport," he says, watching the smoke wreath upwards; "it is different for me."

"And I have you," she answers tenderly. "That is all I want."

"Sweetest Eleanor," he drawls, letting her take his hand. "How easily you are satisfied!"

"I don't quite see that," she answers, puckering her forehead. "I have the only man I love here at my side, glorious scenery all round, I do just as I please, I come and go unquestioned, you have given me a horse to ride, and a house to inhabit, a heart to treasure——"

"Why do you put the heart last?"

She laughs at his question.

"Oh! merely by chance."

"Perhaps it *is* the least valuable," says Quinton, playing with her fingers.

"Don't be silly."

"I wish you were fond of sport, I would teach you to shoot."

"I cannot bear killing things. I really believe I should suffer as much as my victims."

"That would be very weak-minded of you."

"Perhaps, but I *have* a weak mind, you know. I told you that at Copthorne, when you swallowed up my will."

"That sounds as if I were a devouring monster, darling."

She is gazing before her and takes no notice of his remark.

"Copthorne!" she says at last. "*What* a long way off it seems."

"Yes," replies Quinton, "rather fortunate under the circumstances. Your good parents were eminently virtuous; I doubt if they would give me such a friendly welcome now. I say, Eleanor, don't you wish we had Giddy out here. She would wake us up. I should like to see her come in now, with that terrible purple hat, and the white cock's feathers all awry. How full she would be of gossip and how funny!"

He laughs at the recollection of her odd sayings.

"But I don't want waking up," replies Eleanor. "It would be like a douche of cold water thrown rudely over you in a dream to see any face that reminded me of the past. I am sure we don't want Giddy in our paradise. It is far pleasanter without her!"

"You prefer Elizabeth Kachin and her black Tombo!" laughs Carol. "Do you know, Eleanor, you are the only white woman who would speak to her."

"I like them both; they do not bother me with questions."

"By the way, dear, I forgot to tell you Captain Stevenson and Major Short, two old pals of mine, are in these parts. They sent a mounted messenger to ask me to go and see them this afternoon. They don't know what I am doing here. Of course, I shall say 'sport,' that is only another word for 'love.'"

"The two make a bad combination, for some love is only sport to the fickle and untrue."

"How different to yours and mine, Eleanor," he murmurs tenderly. "I wish I could take you with me this afternoon, but it is a long, rough road, and—and——"

"You would rather your friends did not see me, Carol. Don't be afraid to say it. It is very natural. Besides," with a forced smile, "I am so wonderfully pretty, they might become madly enamoured, and kidnap me in these wilds."

There is no conceit in Eleanor's voice or manner as she speaks, but a spirit of cynicism which is new to her.

Quinton kisses her passionately.

"You are beautiful," he whispers.

"Yet you intend leaving me for several long hours! What are these men like?"

"Captain Stevenson is the dearest fellow on earth, and Major Short handsome enough to fascinate any woman. I assure you I am far too jealous to wish to introduce him. His eyes are soft and hazel, the sort that the feminine mind worships—adores! Hair dark and curling, with threads of grey. A smile that has worked destruction in the four quarters of the globe, and a heart so good and tender that he would not intentionally cause a fly a pang."

"I *should* like to meet him," sighs Eleanor.

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"To quote your own sentiments, darling, it is pleasanter alone, we want no one in our paradise, neither Giddy Mounteagle, or the handsome Major Short."

"Now you are vindictive and cross," she declares, as he draws her head down on his shoulder.

"There is my horse. Good-bye, little woman. I shall be back before nightfall."

She watches him ride away, waving from the verandah; he turns several times to kiss his hand.

Then she sinks backs in a low chair, wondering how to kill time until he returns.

The sun sets when he is out of sight, and rises in all its glory at his presence. He is her idol. Her whole happiness and interest lies absorbed in Quinton.

She sends her black servant Quamina to beg Mrs. Kachin to come and sit with her.

It will pass the afternoon to have someone to talk to.

Elizabeth gladly obeys the summons, for she thinks a great deal of her new white friend.

"How is young Tombo?" asks Eleanor, running out to meet Elizabeth, whom she caresses in her affectionately demonstrative manner.

"Oh! so well again, his arm is as good as ever, and he hardly runs stiff at all now."

"My husband has gone to visit two men from Burmah, and I felt terribly deserted and lonely. It is good of you to come Mrs. Kachin."

"I am also glad of a companion," replies Elizabeth. "Big Tombo has gone to superintend the 'Jhooming,' and the boy is with him."

"What is Jhooming?" asks Eleanor.

"Oh! don't you know, they cut down the trees once a year, and burn them when they are quite dry. Then plough the ground, ploughing in all the ash, and sow when the rain comes, scattering the seeds broadcast."

"What busy lives the natives lead! It makes me feel so idle," says Eleanor, stretching her arms. "Yet I love this beautiful country, and enjoy to sit and dream. My days are one long siesta; I am never really awake."

"Ah! you don't work in your home as I do. All this morning I was making clothing for little Tombo on my loom, yet I, too, am happy, Mrs. Quinton. Perhaps you wonder how it is that I married big Tombo. We met in England when I was quite a girl. He was the only honest man it had been my fate to know. I was an unfortunate child, nameless from my birth, yet loved honour and virtue more than anything on earth. My mother was always lenient and kind, but when I grew old enough to realise the wrong she had done me I abhorred her! My marriage released me from a hateful and unwholesome home. I was glad to leave the country in which I first learnt to despise the woman I called by the sacred name of 'mother.'"

Eleanor is pale to the lips; she trembles all over as she listens to Elizabeth.

"I sometimes hear from her now, but she knows my feelings towards her."

"Poor woman!" cries Eleanor, speaking suddenly as if compelled against her will. "You, in your quiet life, with big Tombo, cannot guess the temptations she may have faced. You judge her very harshly. She was kind to you, and it is your duty to love her. You prize virtue and honour, yet do not hesitate to hate and abhor your own flesh and blood."

"It is easy to dictate to others. But if you were to meet that woman, and knew her history, you would pull your skirts aside, for fear they might brush her in passing."

Eleanor shakes her head.

"Oh, no," she says sorrowfully. "I would take her by the hand, and call her 'Sister.'"

"Then you are the right sort of Christian," replies Elizabeth. "I cannot feel that way, because I suffered for her sin—Heaven only knows how bitterly!"

As Eleanor listens to Mrs. Kachin, she feels involuntarily drawn towards her by force of contrast. Their natures are so widely different, for Eleanor was ever lenient, kind-hearted, and forgiving, while Elizabeth is hard, determined, not easily swerved from a purpose.

"Where does your mother live?"

"I hardly know; she is a roving spirit, with no settled home. But her loveless old age is the penalty she must pay for a misused youth. Once she wrote and told me she had enough money laid by to come here if I would receive her."

"And you refused?"

"Most certainly."

"Oh! how *could* you!" cries Eleanor, her eyes flashing with indignation.

"I consider the way I have acted since I came to years of discretion, is simply just retribution. There is a saying that justice begins next door. I have practised it on my nearest of kin."

"You must be very cruel."

Elizabeth smiles vaguely. Her smile is her only beauty. It lights up her stern face, and makes Eleanor forget that she has sandy eyelashes.

They talk together in the low verandah till long after Quinton should have been home.

"He promised not to stay more than an hour with his friends, and it is a two hours' ride," says Eleanor. "He left soon after one o'clock. It is nearly dark."

Elizabeth detects the anxiety in her tone.

"Oh! you know what men are, they are worse than women! The Major has probably a host of good stories, and the Captain is plying him with wine and some extra special cigars. Don't worry, my dear Mrs. Quinton, he is sure to be late."

She presses Eleanor's hand, and wishes her good-bye.

Then Mrs. Katchin hurries up the hill to her hut, where big Tombo is growling at her absence, and little Tombo getting into endless mischief, which only his mother's watchful eye can prevent.

Night has fallen, but still Eleanor waits on the verandah, with widely-opened eyes, staring along the zigzag path by which Carol rode away. She remembers he turned back to look at her three times, kissing his hand twice. What can have detained him? Surely he knows how nervous she is!

Eleanor rises and walks up and down distractedly, her face ashen pale, her figure trembling.

He has had an accident—she is certain of it. The road, he said, was lonely and rough; it winds near a precipice, the loose stones and boulders roll down the slope of the hill and fall into the abyss.

Perhaps his horse has fallen a victim to disease upon the way, or he has been attacked by a savage troop and speared to death.

These thoughts are too horrible to be borne with equanimity; the stillness of night appals her; she can stand it no longer.

Summoning Quamina, she orders her horse to be saddled immediately, with the idea of flying to his aid. She loves him too well to fear the night, the dangers of that lone road, or her indifferent horsemanship! She would die sooner than sit at home when he might need assistance.

Her horse is the handsomest animal that Carol could buy. She has named him "Braye du Valle."

The black men stare wondrously as she mounts and rides out bravely into the night.

"Braye du Valle," she whispers, "we must find him if it costs our lives!"

In the meanwhile Quinton has bidden his friends good-bye, having stayed far later than he intended, talking over old times, and airing his favourite tiger adventures.

It is dark, and he feels a pang of self-reproach at the thought of Eleanor.

Yet his heart is light, and he whistles as he turns his horse's head homewards.

He loses himself in thought, for Carol Quinton is an imaginative man. As far as his fancy is concerned, he is artist, author, poet and actor. He creates pictures in his

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brain, dreams of immortal verse, invents a thousand thrilling anecdotes, and quaint love histories. His train of ideas is more that of a woman than a man.

The moon rises, and he watches it floating above him

> Like one that had been led astray,
> Through the heaven's wide pathless way.

But the soul of the poet, soaring in the high reason of his fancies, is suddenly rudely shaken. His horse starts, throws up its head and snorts, then shies across the road, as a dark shadow blackens the white stretch of moonlit ground.

"Steady," murmurs Quinton, patting the animal's neck, which is damp with sudden terror.

A black figure comes out from the gloom as he speaks—a tall, masked man on horseback—and before Quinton realises his presence he is seized violently by the throat and dragged from his saddle. A hissing sound as of suppressed rage issues from the assassin's lips—he towers above Quinton, and is muscular and active. Carol is taken unawares, and therefore at a disadvantage. He is like a rat in the paws of a tiger; he can neither cry out nor speak, for the cruel fingers press with deadly force upon his windpipe, and he is flung backwards and forwards, shaken till his teeth rattle in his head and his eyes all but drop from their sockets.

The moon swims round in a sea of blood—he gasps, gurgles, struggles.

The savage man in whose clutches he suddenly finds himself seems glorying in his power.

Quinton feels himself face to face with death: he is a child in the hands of this dark highwayman.

The thought rises suddenly to his fading senses:

"By night an Atheist half believes in God."

The terror of judgment is upon him—hell threatens. Through the black slits of the mask he faintly discerns the eyes of his tormentor, whose face is in such close proximity to his own that the hot breath of passion brushes his brow. They are the eyes of a devil, burning as coals of fire—glowing, scintillating. The broad white teeth of the man glisten as they press his lower lip; then he loosens his hold on Quinton's throat, and gropes for his hand.

The two are fighting now like twin devils under the dark trees, through which the moonlight flits. They roll over in the dust, while Quinton breathes out curses, struggling for mastery. More than once he feels one finger of his left hand caught in the stranger's grasp, then, as with a cry of triumph which rends the air with hideous mirth, superhuman strength seems to possess the masked man. He picks up Quinton in his sinewy arms, whirls him once wildly above his head, and drops him over a rock, down a bank—a fall only of a few feet, on to thick undergrowth below. Then leaping back into his saddle, he gallops at full speed towards the jungle, while Quinton lies gasping and shaking, cut and bleeding from the fray.

He rises dizzily—strange!—there are no bones broken, only the uncomfortable feeling of those hot fingers at his throat, and the giddy sensation from the violent shaking. He feels for his watch; it is still there. Some money fallen from his pocket lies loose on the wayside. Nothing apparently is stolen.

Then he looks down suddenly at his finger, the one twice captured in their struggle.

His cat's-eye ring has gone!

CHAPTER XVIII.

> Where there ain't no Ten Commandments.
> *The Road to Mandalay.*—Rudyard Kipling.

As Carol goes on through the night, fear is in his heart.

How easily the dark, vindictive, savage creature could have cast him wantonly into eternity, yet he stayed his hand. Evidently he had not desired Quinton's life, since he took nothing but a little band of gold, with a cat's-eye. Such a worthless prize—a woman's ring.

The scene is a puzzle to Carol Quinton, the mystery of it haunts him. In every shadow he sees a black mask, at the slightest sound his blood runs cold, the creaking of the boughs above are to him the echo of pursuing hoofs, and the cry of the parrot, that sinister yell which accompanied his fall. Even the stars are flashing eyes, the moon an enemy, and the stones devils.

Quinton is not a brave man; truth to tell, he is a coward. His whole system is suffering from the shock, while the long tramp he has taken in search of his horse, which strayed from the road, increased his nervous agitation.

His hands tremble as they hold the reins, his knees knock against his frightened horse, who in sympathy with his master, starts at every step, appearing to find his route peopled with spirits.

"What did it all mean—what could it mean?" he asks himself again and again.

The beating of his heart seems to Quinton as thunder on the air, which is heavy and oppressive, a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours!

Surely this can be no fancy—the slow tread of a sure-footed beast on the path before him. Carol quails and whitens to the lips. The moon passes behind a cloud—a second figure is at his side. He spurs his horse, and the frantic swish of his crop lays a deep weal on the animal's withers. It breaks into a gallop, throwing up the dust around and flying down a steep descent. He hears the hoofs following closely in the rear, some one is nearly upon him, gaining inch by inch. His courage sinks—dies—he is white, perspiring, terrified, limp! His senses reel, he drops the reins, falling forward on his horse's neck. His fingers clutch the mane, while a woman's voice cries behind:

"Carol! Carol!"

The horse recognises Eleanor's soft tones, and halts, just in time for Quinton to fall unharmed, swooning to the earth.

Eleanor springs off "Braye du Valle," sinking on her knees in terror by the helpless form. She sees the bleeding scratches on his face and hands, but feels his heart beat, knowing that he still lives.

"Oh, Carol," she murmurs, pillowing his head on her breast, "what is the matter?"

He stirs faintly, a convulsive shudder runs through his limbs.

"I am here, Carol," she continues tenderly. "I, Eleanor!"

He starts up, staring at her in the moonlight.

"But the man," he gasps, "the masked man who followed me only a moment since. What has happened? What has become of him?"

"*I* followed you down the slope. I came out to find you, fearing you had met with some accident on the road. Just as I was approaching and about to speak, you dashed past me, and then——"

"What then?" interpolates Carol impatiently.

"I suppose you fainted, for I saw you roll from your saddle as the horse drew up at the sound of my voice."

"You ought not to have come," says Carol, somewhat harshly, but Eleanor's blinded senses, dulled under the influence of her love, heed not his ill-temper.

He rises surlily, brushing some blood off his forehead.

He mounts Eleanor upon her horse without a word.

"Why are you so late?" she asks.

"I was attacked on the road by a madman, and half killed," he replies between his teeth.

"Oh, Carol!" she exclaims, her face blanching, "how terrible!"

"Yes, it was rather bad."

Then he describes the scene graphically as they ride on side by side, till Eleanor is shivering with horror.

"Strangely enough," he says, "the only thing I lost in the struggle was that cat's-eye ring you gave me. I think the man imagined it was something of value."

"Is that so?" replies Eleanor slowly, staring before her into the moonlight. "I would rather anything had gone but that."

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"I am sorry, too; I shall miss it."

There is a pause.

"You are ill, exhausted!" murmurs Eleanor sympathetically.

"Oh, no; don't worry. But I wish I knew who the devil that man was."

* * * * *

"Captain Stevenson wants to give me an Irish terrier," says Carol, a few mornings later. "I think it will be well to have a dog about the place, especially after what happened the other night."

"Yes, indeed; I should accept it by all means."

"I will ride over and see him early, and get back by daylight."

Eleanor picks up a book, leaning back wearily. She is growing accustomed to his absences. The Eleanor who was so difficult to please with Philip Roche will stand anything from Carol Quinton.

Her one idea is to yield to his every whim, regard his every wish. To live only to please.

He bends over her. She is reading Shakespeare for the first time.

"What is honour?—a word," she quotes aloud. "What is that word, honour?—air."

He kisses the curling hair on her forehead.

"Good-bye, my love. You shall not be alarmed this time."

"Come back soon, Carol."

She does not rise to kiss her hand or wave as he rides away.

She is beginning to see with a woman's shrewd instinct that he treats her with more deference when she feigns indifference.

She is dreaming over her book, and her idle fingers turn the pages till they come to *Macbeth*. By chance her eyes fall on five familiar words, of whose origin she was ignorant.

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow!"

A low laugh ripples from her lips, she rises and tosses the volume aside. They have no power to frighten her now, for the to-morrows mean Carol, life, love.

Here in this beautiful country she is passing a charmed existence. Nature in all its majesty around appeals to her senses, ravishes her eye, while she, lovely in her picturesque surroundings, feels like a goddess of the east.

She hears the sounds of hoofs below, and leans over the balustrade, a bright smile parting her lips, the sunlight streaming on her hair, looking quite childlike in her soft white gown, which clings around her girlish figure.

Two men ride up, one tall, fair, and emaciated in appearance, the other dark, and indescribably handsome.

"Does Mr. Quinton live here?" asks the fair man, raising his hat.

"Yes," replies Eleanor, "but he is out now; won't you come in?"

The men hesitate and exchange glances.

"Are you Captain Stevenson and Major Short?" looking at them through her long lashes, with half-veiled curiosity.

They reply in the affirmative, and Eleanor informs them that Carol is already on his way to their encampment at K——

"But I am all alone, and very dull," says Eleanor plaintively. "Do rest and refresh yourselves."

She sends for a man to take their horses, and receives them in the verandah with a gracious air.

"May I ask to whom we have the pleasure of speaking?" murmurs Captain Stevenson.

"Oh! didn't I introduce myself?" says Eleanor with a slight flush. "How stupid of me! I am Mrs. Quinton, you know, or rather you *don't* know," laughing spontaneously. "The fact is Carol and I made a runaway match against the wishes of my relations—very shocking, was it not? But I am not going to appal you with domestic details. A whisky and soda is more to the point. Is not this an ideal spot?"

The visitors hardly notice the surrounding scenery. They are looking at the lovely features of their blushing young hostess.

An Irish terrier has followed them hot and panting into the verandah.

"I have brought the dog I promised your husband," says Captain Stevenson. "He is a fine little fellow, and game for anything."

"It is extremely good of you," cries Eleanor, catching the dog up in her arms, and feeding him with biscuits.

She puts both the strangers at their ease at once. It is long since she has had anyone fresh to talk to, and the time flies, for they all three have much to say. Eleanor will not let them go.

"You must stay and lunch with me," she murmurs persuasively. "Carol will be so angry if I don't keep you, and the days are so long without him."

"I can't think how it was we did not meet if he rode our way," declares Major Short, when lunch is over, and Eleanor has begged them to smoke.

"Nor I; but he must be home early."

"Is that your guitar?" asks Major Short.

"Yes, but unfortunately I cannot play it. Carol has taught me a few chords, but I have no music."

"Short is the man to sing," Captain Stevenson vouchsafes.

Eleanor seizes the instrument, and holds it out to him with a winning smile.

"Do give us one little song!" she pleads.

He takes the guitar with a kind look from his exquisite brown eyes, and strokes the strings, it seems so gently, that they whisper like the wind in the trees.

"What will you have?"

Eleanor leans forward with her chin between her hands, gazing at him intently.

"Anything you like."

"This road," says Captain Stevenson, leaning over the verandah, "is the road to Mandalay. It seems impregnated with the spirit of Rudyard Kipling."

"That shall be the song," says Major Short.

Captain Stevenson half sits on the balustrade, with the terrier beside him gazing up wistfully into his eyes. Eleanor retains her intent attitude, as a voice more beautiful and mellow than any she has ever heard swells out on the hot air.

Eleanor is moved almost to tears by the magnetism of that wonderful sound, thrilling her very being, for she is highly emotional.

The tune is soft, and the well-known words to the familiar melody take pathos from their rough uncultured sentiment.

She remembers once hearing a man recite the words at a musical "At home."

People had cried then; they knew not why, save that his elocution was exquisite, and he breathed it in an undertone:

By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin' eastwards to the sea,
There's a Burmah girl a-setting, and I know she thinks o' me,
For the wind is in the palm trees, and the temple bells they say:
"Come you back, you British soldier, come you back to Mandalay."

Eleanor and Captain Stevenson join in the chorus softly. It is sung slowly, like a low wail, Major Short's clear notes rising above the rest.

Come you back to Mandalay,
Where the old Flotilla lay,
Can't you 'ear their paddles chunkin' from Rangoon to Mandalay?
On the road to Mandalay,
Where the flyin' fishes play,
And the dawn comes up like thunder out er China, 'crost the bay.

As they sing, Carol rides up the hill, and the music falls on his astonished ear. Singing in their verandah—how can that be?

Eleanor is the first to catch sight of him, but does not speak or move, though Quinton's presence always quickens her pulses.

The chords of the guitar take up the refrain, and Captain Stevenson, turning, espies Carol.

When the mist was on the rice fields, an' the sun was droppin' low,

continues the rich voice.

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"Why, there's Quinton!" exclaims Captain Stevenson, breaking into the melody. "My dear fellow, how was it we missed on the road?"

"I can't imagine," he replies; "I suppose I took a different path." His eyes shift uneasily, a flush rises to his brow.

"Your wife has been most kind and hospitable," declares Major Short, laying down the guitar.

"I am delighted she kept you."

"We brought the dog. He has already attached himself to Mrs. Quinton. I assure you at lunch his preference for her was most marked; he wouldn't look at us."

"Cupboard love, eh? I suppose she fed him."

"Well, yes, I should rather think so, he will not require anything more for some time."

"I am afraid," says Quinton, "that I interrupted a concert. You all looked most Bohemian and enjoying the *dolce far niente* stage of existence."

"It was too bad to break off in the middle of your song, Major Short," Eleanor murmurs, seating herself beside him and taking up the guitar. "I wish you could teach me the accompaniment, for I do know a few notes vaguely, and though I have never learned to sing I can croon a little."

"It really is not difficult," Major Short assures her. "I will send you the song if you like."

"Thanks, but I cannot read music, only I have rather a good ear."

So he strikes the chords one by one very slowly, while Eleanor repeats them.

"I should never have picked it out by myself. Now I shall be able to sing to Carol in the evenings."

"Are they not delightful?" says Eleanor, as the two men ride away. "I have quite enjoyed to-day, Carol."

"I believe," muttered Major Short as they turned out of sight, "I believe that fellow Quinton lied to his wife. Do you think for a moment he went our way? There is only one road that is fit to ride on, that he could have gone by, besides, it was written on his face when he saw us."

"You are too sharp, Short, my boy," laughed the good-natured Captain Stevenson. "But there is something wrong with Quinton undeniably. I wonder who the little woman is, and where she came from?"

Major Short rides on in silence, he is thinking of the little woman's smile.

That night, as Quinton smokes in his low cane chair, Eleanor brings the guitar, running her lithe fingers over the strings.

"I say, Eleanor," he begins, "you need not have let out you could not read music. It was awfully *gauche* of you. You don't want to advertise your farm origin."

"I am so sorry, darling," she answers penitently.

Again she strikes the chords, this time hesitatingly, for her hand trembles.

The spicy garlic smells are wafted on the night air.

Eleanor breaks suddenly into song, as if inspired by the oriental atmosphere.

When the mist was on the rice fields, an' the sun was droppin' low,
She'd git her little banjo, an' she'd sing "Kullalo-lo!"
With her arm upon my shoulder, an' 'er cheek agin my cheek,
We use ter watch the steamers, and the 'hathis "pilin'" teak.

Her voice travels far in the darkness; she feels as if singing to some unseen audience—perchance spirits peopling that road to Mandalay.

The dog at her feet starts up suddenly, bristling all over, growling, barking!

"Did you hear anything?" asks Carol nervously.

"I fancied a rustle came from the bushes."

"Perhaps danger is stalking abroad to-night," mutters Carol, throwing his cigar aside.

The dog refuses to be silenced, while Eleanor, holding him by the collar, tries to soothe his petulance.

But Carol goes indoors.

(To be continued.)

YOUR CHARACTER FROM HANDWRITING.

Up to the present I have steadfastly set my face against the delineation of character from handwriting through the medium of *P.W.* However, so many letters have reached me quite recently, asking that I should start this feature in *P.W.*, that I have at length decided to do so.

I have secured the services of the most expert Graphologist, whose accuracy in past cases has been proved beyond a doubt.

WHAT TO DO.

Send a specimen of your handwriting on an unruled sheet of paper, and signed with your customary signature and full address. Inclose six penny stamps and an envelope stamped and addressed to yourself, to Graphologist, *Short Stories* Offices, Henrietta Street, London.

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If you only know the right way to go to work.

WE WILL TELL YOU.

In each number of *The Story Teller* appear ten easy problems. The first batch of the Second Series was printed in the issue dated March 21st, the second appears in that dated March 28th, the third will appear on April 4th, and the fourth on April 11th.

Two Five-pound Notes and fifteen One Pound Prizes are given to those who succeed in getting the *greatest number* of these forty problems correct.

An EASY WAY to EARN £100.

At the left hand bottom corner of the second page of the cover of **SHORT STORIES** will be found a coupon. This coupon will appear every week during the whole of 1896. It will also appear every week in **PEARSON'S WEEKLY** and **THE STORY TELLER** during the same period.

WHAT TO DO.

Procure as many of these coupons as you possibly can. Once you get them keep them. A good way would be to paste them on to slips of paper. A better way would be to paste them neatly into a book. However, the main thing is to get and to keep them.

WHY YOU SHOULD DO IT?

Because we are going to give the person who collects the most coupons during the year 1896 the sum of One Hundred Pounds, and if you do not want this money for yourself you can nominate someone to whom it would be useful.

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One Year	6s. 6d.
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SUCH AS

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ANNUAL SALE SIX MILLION BOXES.

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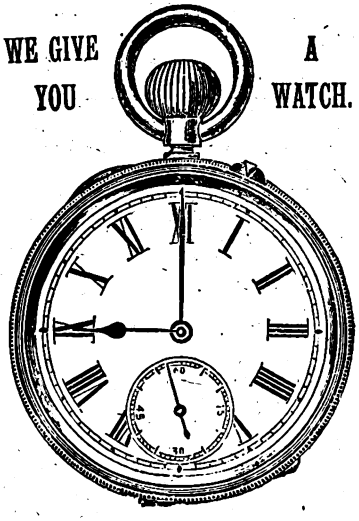

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One Gent's Egyptian Gold Albert, or one Lady's Egyptian Gold Albert	2s. 6d.	FOR
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NEW SERIAL JUST STARTED.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 379. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 4TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

BE SURE TO KEEP IT WELL. THIS ADVERTISEMENT.

WONDERFUL BARGAINS!

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	ft. in.	ft. in.	Sale Price. s. d.	Former Price. s. d.
No. 1	9 0 by	6 0	5 6	9 0
„ 2	9 0 „	7 6	7 0	11 6
„ 3	9 0 „	9 0	8 6	13 6
„ 4	10 6 „	7 6	8 9	13 9
„ 5	10 6 „	9 0	10 0	15 6
„ 6	12 0 „	9 0	11 6	18 0
„ 7	10 6 „	10 6	12 0	18 6
„ 8	12 0 „	10 6	13 6	20 6
No. 9	15 0 by	9 0	14 3	22 6
„ 10	13 6 „	10 6	15 3	24 0
„ 11	12 0 „	12 0	15 3	24 0
„ 12	13 6 „	12 0	17 0	27 0
„ 13	15 0 „	12 0	19 0	32 6
„ 14	18 0 „	12 0	22 9	36 0
„ 15	21 0 „	12 0	26 0	42 0

These Carpets are splendid imitations of Real Brussels Carpets, the designs having been carefully copied from the originals, both as regards colourings and patterns, so that when in use it is almost impossible, except by close scrutiny, to detect the difference. They have gained a world-wide reputation for magnificence, cheapness, and utility, having no equal. All designs are registered and deservedly considered works of art.

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☞ The **WIND PILLS** being Purely Vegetable, Tasteless and Mild, and Tonic in their action, may be taken with perfect safety by the most delicate of either sex.

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RED NOSES

Caused by INDIGESTION, etc. All who suffer from this disfiguring complaint should write for DR. HOWELL'S RENOWNED REMEDY, 22, Glasshouse Street, London, W., who guarantees a cure in a few days. 2/9 a box.

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OUR NEW ILLUSTRATED MANUAL mailed free upon request, showing how these profits may be made WITHOUT SPECULATION. Cheques for profits mailed promptly 1st of each month, and for withdrawals of capital on 2nd and 16th of each month. Trial investments of £5 and upwards may be made.

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PEARSON'S £100 COUPON.

No. 14

April 4, 1896.

S.S. S.S.

HAIR DESTROYED.

A doctor's widow knows of a simple, inexpensive remedy that permanently destroys the roots, and will forward particulars free to all those afflicted sending stamped envelope addressed Mrs. B. D. WOOD, 4, DUKE STREET, VILLIERS STREET, LONDON, W.

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If so, wear the "*AD*" Invisible Elevators (Regd.). Will increase your height up to four inches; the only approved means; detection impossible; simple, inexpensive. Send stamped envelope for particulars to the ORIENTAL TOILET CO. (B 5 Dept.), 37, Strand, London.

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A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs. "T. D.," 57 Strand, London.

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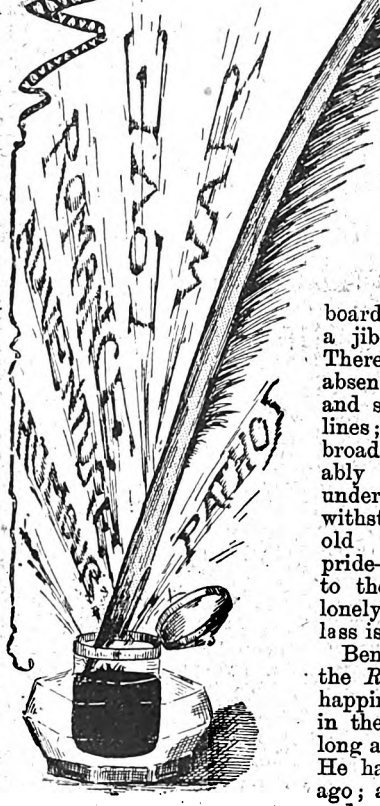
SHORT STORIES

EDITED by C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 379.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending April 4th, 1896.



Ben Boardman's Boat.

The *Rescue* was an unwieldy, centre-board craft carrying only a jib and a mainsail. There was a noticeable absence of the graceful and symmetrical in her lines; she was of a broad beam, and remarkably steady and slow under canvas. Yet, notwithstanding, she was old Ben Boardman's pride—something more to the aged, sea-worn, lonely man, than many a lass is to her lover.

Ben Boardman loved the *Rescue*; his whole happiness was centred in the boat, that is the long and the short of it. He had built her years ago; and he had patched and repatched her exceedingly tub-like sides with all the loving care of a creator restoring his own handiwork.

The tide was low, one afternoon in July, and the *Rescue* lay—unsupported by a single chock—high and dry, careening to starboard, upon the Worthing beach-shingle. And her proprietor leant against a weather-beaten capstan—ruminating.

Such men as Ben will pass nearly a whole day in this manner, in the profoundest meditation, thinking of days that have gone, and of deeds that have been long since forgotten save by themselves.

Many a quid of rum-soaked tobacco did the old man turn over between his toothless gums, ere the tide came in. But at the approach of the water, his thoughts winged themselves back to his craft in the background of the peaceful picture of which he himself formed the quaint centre-piece.

"There'll be a bit o' a westerly breeze 'fore long," he muttered to himself. Then, as though the *Rescue* was imbued with life, and could hear him, he added in a louder tone: "Old gal, may-be we'll earn a trifle i' the evening."

The water was smooth as a mill-pond, and the heat rose from the surface in a shimmering haze. The tide drew nearer and nearer, creating scarce a ripple. A sixty-ton yawl lay at anchor some three miles to seaward; she was trim and graceful, heavily sparred, and contrasted strangely with the old tub which Ben Boardman loved so well.

Suddenly a boat put off from the yawl, manned by one of the yachtsmen, a lady and gentleman being seated in the stern.

Ben, ever mindful of the opportunity of receiving a gratuity, made his way down the beach, crossed the thin strip of level sands, and stood knee-deep in the water, in readiness to run the boat well ashore, so that the dainty feet of the lady might alight upon a comparatively dry spot.

He scanned the yawl, as he stood there—she had only arrived at her anchorage that morning—and his keen and practised eye took in and fully appreciated the beauty of her lines. But not for a fleet of such vessels would the old man have exchanged his *Rescue*, the work of his own hands.

Meanwhile, the boat—urged through the smooth waters by the muscular arms of the yachtsman—shot shorewards at a rapid rate.

In the course of a not uneventful life, Ben Boardman had visited many places, and had seen many beautiful women of almost all nationalities, but never had his eyes rested upon a more lovely face than that of the fair occupant of the boat's stern.

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Beatrice Douglas—for such was her name—was, indeed, beautiful. Her brilliant blue eyes shone like stars; her hair—of a hue betwixt black and brown—waved in graceful carelessness above her smooth, white forehead, above her little, shell-pink ears, and protruded in delicious, natural curls from beneath her red, stocking-shaped cap. She had, perhaps, too little colour in her cheeks; but her lips made amends, for they were of a rich carmine, and, when parted, displayed an even row of little, pearl-white teeth. She was attired in a white yachting blouse of some dainty material, which—cut somewhat low—displayed her graceful white neck and throat, and gave but a glimpse of the smooth whiteness of her bosom. The be-ringed, taper fingers of her right hand hung over the boat's side, and allowed the water to touch their tips, causing a little ripple. It seemed to Ben Boardman that she was thus conferring a kindness upon the very sea.

And the man beside her, Ronald Douglas, her husband, also possessed features most striking to all who beheld him. Had Ben Boardman been an educated man, he would have compared the proprietor of the yawl to a Greek god, but the classics were complete strangers to the old boatman.

Nevertheless. Ronald Douglas did not appear like a man upon whom the world was smiling. There was a look of mental torture, of pain immeasurable, in his dark eyes. But his wife did not appear to notice anything amiss. She continued to chat, making use of a wondrous flow of small-talk, as was her wont, whilst her husband answered only in monosyllables, or not at all.

The boat grounded noiselessly, and Ben Boardman, touching his grizzled forelock, seized the gunwale and with a mighty shove succeeded in forcing the keel half a-boat's length farther in land.

A moment later he was holding one of Beatrice Douglas' little hands, whilst her husband stood beside him, holding the other. Poising herself for one second upon the boat's side, she sprang lightly between them upon the glistening sand. She smiled her thanks to the old man, such a smile as lived in his memory for many a day afterwards. In his roughly poetic way, he mentally compared it to the breaking dawn in summer, to the sunlight dancing on the waters, to something not of the earth earthly, but proceeding direct from Heaven.

Ronald Douglas carelessly tossed half-a-crown towards Ben, which the latter picked up, too astonished to mutter his guttural thanks. So the old man stood winking and blinking, in perplexity watching the two lithe and graceful receding forms, wondering if it were possible that they were those of anything less than a prince and princess *incognito*.

But he envied their lot not one whit; for did he not possess a certain old centre-board boat called the *Rescue*, and was she not worth all the gold in the mint, to him?

And he determined to put the lightly-earned piece of silver in the cracked tea-pot upon the mantelpiece in his tiny cabin, where all his extra pence were placed, in preparation for the day when the *Rescue* might require a thorough overhauling and repatching.

* * * * *

Ronald Douglas and his wife wended their way up the beach and along the esplanade; he, moody and taciturn; and she, with the gaiety that was a part of her very nature, carelessly chattering, chattering, chattering.

She was in the middle of a trivial remark concerning the occupant of a bath-chair, when he cut short her sentence, unfinished.

"Trixy," he said—he always called her by that name, no one else did so, and it seemed one more link in the chain of his great love for her, which bound her so closely to him—"Trixy, supposing that I was a poor man. Could you bear to be a poor man's wife?"

She pouted slightly, then looked up at him, smiling. "What an absurd idea to get into that very sensible head," she said banteringly. "You are not poor. So what does it matter?"

"But supposing——" he persisted.

"There are no grounds for the supposition. Why suppose absurdities?" and she brushed aside a stray curl from her forehead.

"But if——"

"But me no buts," she broke in, placing her hand chidingly before his mouth.

He tugged at his moustache, half viciously. The gloom in his eyes deepened. Could she not be serious, and take *him* seriously, for one minute?

"Listen," he said, halting, and taking her by the wrist. "I have a reason for asking you this. Tell me honestly. Could you bear a life of poverty?"

"Why, what do you mean, Ronald? Are you going to endow the church with all your worldly goods?"

She was still bantering. She could not conceive that his question had any serious meaning. She thought, perhaps, that he was merely testing the depth of her love for him.

"Could you bear it?" he repeated doggedly. A fever of anxiety, a world of eagerness, lay in his eyes.

"Certainly not," she replied decisively. "I would sooner *die* than be poverty-stricken. I think that I was made for riches, and that riches were made for me. Could a butterfly exist without sunlight, eh, *mon cher!*"

"You mean that?"

"Decidedly," she made answer, with perhaps more earnestness than she had ever made use of in her life.

Ronald Douglas dropped her wrist. He half turned, and continued his walk. A deathly-chill shudder swept through him. Yet his brain seemed to be on fire. He knew that she had spoken truly. He knew that she could never mate with poverty, knew that life would be a living death to her without its pleasures, its delicacies, its luxuries, obtainable only by those with a long banking account.

"I would sooner die than be poverty-stricken." These words kept surging with fearful significance again and again through his brain.

He cast a look seaward. His yacht lay in the offing. But *morally*, to-day, it was his no longer. In another week he would *legally* have no claim upon it. He was a ruined man.

And she—the woman whom he loved more than riches, fame, aye, even life itself—knew nothing of the blow about to fall upon them both.

She had resumed her careless small-talk, but he heard not a word. An echo of her voice seemed to hail him from the sky, and sea, and land. "I would sooner die than be poverty-stricken," it was dinning in his ears.

* * * * *

The evening shadows drew across the skies; the tide was at the full. A few occasional gusts of westerly wind stirred the surface of the Channel waters. Many styles of craft were lying lazily to their anchorage east and west of the pier. Slowly, imperceptibly, their outlines dimmed, and nothing but ghostly, shadowy objects rose and fell upon the black, heaving bosom o

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the sea. Suddenly, almost simultaneously, the anchor lights were hoisted, looking like so many twinkling stars, the reflection of which twinkled yet more upon the surface of the sea. The only sound that broke upon Ben Boardman's ears was the sough, sough, of the waters as they lapped the esplanade beneath his feet, a fitting accompaniment to the silence of peace and contentment that stretch like a gauzy cloak about the waterside.

Ben Boardman's eyes dwelt upon the *Rescue* as she now rode to her anchor, and—his imagination playing strange tricks with his eyesight—he fancied he saw the same beautiful face, which had so deeply impressed him in the afternoon, gazing mournfully upon him from the stern of his old tub.

He had put aside all hopes of earning a few shillings by taking holiday-makers for a sail, for he had appealed to them in vain. But he sat upon a public seat, loath to go home, loath to leave his cherished *Rescue* for the night. Something impelled him to remain. Perhaps it was the face of Beatrice Douglas, which fancy had conjured up and had located in his own boat.

Suddenly, he felt a hand laid upon his shoulder. He turned round. The vision passed from his sight, only to give place to the smiling face of Beatrice Douglas in the flesh.

She smiled upon him as she had smiled at their former meeting. To Ben Boardman she appeared to illumine the very darkness.

He rose to his feet and touched his forelock. What could *she* want with such as him? he mentally questioned.

"Here he is, Ronald! Here is our old friend!" she cried gleefully, in a voice of surpassing sweetness.

Yes! Ronald Douglas could see him. He looked upon the old man as a condemned felon might look upon his executioner. He met the boatman's glance, and shuddered. Despair had entered into his soul. He was suffering the torture of the damned. He would have given up even then, at the eleventh hour, he would have turned aside from the purpose that seemed to goad him on with such relentless force and cruelty, had not he known that his wife's answer would have still been: "I would sooner die than be poverty-stricken."

His eyes roved restlessly around. Suddenly he perceived the *Rescue*, bobbing up and down, a few fathoms distant.

"My wife and I wish to go for a moonlight sail," he said, in an unnaturally calm voice. "Alone, you understand. What deposit shall I leave upon your old cask? What is her value to you?" And he pointed to the pride of Ben Boardman's heart.

"Cask!" the boatman muttered in indignation. "She's the tightest craft on the beach!"

"Yes. I dare say she is. That is what we want. Something tight and trim," Ronald Douglas replied reassuringly. Neither his wife nor Ben Boardman appeared to note the irony underlying his words.

"Fifty poun' is her value to me," said Ben.

Perhaps he would have disdained to carry on further conversation with one who had thus insulted him on his own hearth, as it were, had it not been for the beautiful, smiling face, and the lustrous eyes that gazed down upon him. Perhaps, but for Beatrice Douglas, he would have bidden the young man go his way.

The breeze freshened. The stars, which had already peeped forth, became ever and anon obscured by dark, fleeting clouds.

Ronald Douglas knew the value of such a boat as the *Rescue*. A ten-pound note should have purchased her at any time.

But what mattered her value to him? If the old man honestly thought her worth fifty pounds, he was entitled to the amount. This was no case for shilly-shallying.

He took a role of bank-notes out of his pocket-book, and counted out eleven.

"Here are fifty pounds as security for your boat," he said, "and a fiver for her hire."

Ben Boardman fairly gasped in his astonishment. Was the world coming to an end? or had an angel come upon him unawares?

Mechanically he put out his wrinkled hand, and took the proffered paper. Then he laid the little bundle on his knee, and counted the notes with trembling fingers, and great, wide-open staring eyes.

What would not this money buy? He thought of the mainsail that he was laying up his pence for; and he looked at the five-pound note with a feeling of unholy joy. He felt as though he was doing something wrong in taking so large a sum for a midnight sail, and his second impulse was to return the money to his patron.

Beatrice Douglas apparently read his thoughts, for she placed her warm little hand upon that of the old man, checking any movement.

"No, no," she said. "Keep it. You may want it to mend your boat. My husband is very rich, and you are quite welcome. The rest of the money is only in trust, you know. We might lose your boat and both be drowned, then you would have no one to repay you for your loss."

And she laughed merrily at the bare idea of such a contingency.

So the old man put one note in his pocket, and stowed the rest away in the bosom of his jersey.

It was a long time since he had had so large a sum in his possession, but he would not have exchanged his *Rescue* for fifty times fifty pounds.

Borrowing a dinghy from one of the neighbouring boatmen, old Ben Boardman sculled his customers alongside the tub-like craft, and put them aboard her.

He slipped the cable, knowing that the tide would have receded considerably, leaving it high and dry before she returned. Then he hoisted the jib and mainsail, hauled aft the sheet, and placed it in the hands of Ronald Douglas.

"What is the name of your boat?" Beatrice Douglas asked, as Ben Boardman hauled the dinghy up to the stern.

"The *Rescue*, lady," he replied, as he stepped over the side.

She smiled and nodded to him, as he slowly pulled away to the shore. And the old man mentally swore to change the name from "*Rescue*" to whatsoever name this angel lady bore.

But Ronald Douglas groaned in spirit. The *Rescue*! Well, it was the only means of rescue which he found to hand. He saw no other opportunity of saving his loved one from the poverty which—through rash and hazardous speculation—he had brought upon her.

"I would sooner die than be poverty-stricken." The words kept dinning in his ears, to the swish, swash, of the water lapping round the stem of the *Rescue*, with maddening persistency. Yes, he must follow the line of action which he had already mentally mapped out. There must be no divergence from the scheme. And she—she should never know how near she had been to that pauperism that she dreaded more than death. She

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should remain happy, the gay, thoughtless, babbling, butterfly-like creature she had ever been, until—until the scheme should reach accomplishment.

He set his teeth hard, steadied the helm, and sailed the *Rescue* to the southward.

And Beatrice Douglas chatted incessantly, speculating upon the success of a naval ball, to which they had been invited, which was to take place at Portsmouth in the following week.

* * * * *

They had been out somewhat over an hour, and had run before the wind, up channel, for a distance of four or five knots.

"I think we had better bring her round now," said Ronald Douglas, and he raised his great, sad eyes to his wife's brilliant bewitching ones, half questioningly.

"By all means, Ronald, let us go back," she replied, shivering slightly. "You are not yourself this evening. Your companionship is as delightful as that of any well-conducted bear, excepting that you do not indulge in hugging."

He put the helm down, the *Rescue* answered quickly, and he steadied her, hauling in the slack of the sheets, so that she shot along on the starboard tack.

The moon's light broke between the ever passing clouds, and played upon the dazzling beauty of the woman beside him.

He looked upon her, hungrily, despairingly. Then he drew her to him, and imprinted kiss after kiss upon her lovely mouth.

"Why did you wish so particularly to sail this boat?" she asked later. "It is much pleasanter on board the *Freak of Fortune*."

"Because—because I wanted something that I could sail myself, unassisted. That is why I took yon old man's ewe-lamb."

She shuddered. The light died out of her eyes, giving place to a look of alarm. Some subtle note in her husband's tones had terrified her. She had never known him to speak in a voice so pregnant with restrained pain. It was as the voice of one mentally tortured. She could not understand it. She merely sat silent, shivering, watching him, not daring to take her eyes from his.

The wind had increased in strength, and the *Rescue* sped along in a south-westerly direction towards the coast of France.

Directing his wife to take the helm and keep the vessel upon her course, Ronald Douglas sprang forward and hauled up the centre-board. The time of Beatrice Douglas' deliverance had come.

Instantly the *Rescue* heeled to port. Her gunwale went under; the water rushed in like an avalanche.

"Hard over! hard over!" the wretched man shrieked. His wife would never have to face poverty. She was already facing death. Her face was white as marble; her lips were blue; her beautiful eyes were starting from their sockets.

But she did his bidding bravely.

At the same time, knowing something of seamanship, she attempted to let go the main sheet. A shriek broke from her parted lips, another, and another. Her husband had made it fast, so that she could not cast it adrift. The death-trap was complete. In a frenzy of terror she tore her dainty fingers, till the blood spurted from them, in futilely attempting to wrench the bolt out. Now, when it was too late, Ronald Douglas would have bartered away his soul to save the life of the woman he loved.

All this took scarcely five seconds, but it seemed a life-time to the man clinging to the ring of the centre-board, with those agonised shrieks ringing in his ears.

The *Rescue* answered to her helm. The jib fluttered for a moment, then the breeze struck the mainsail with a resounding thud. The boom swung from port to starboard, crashing against the head of Ronald Douglas. He was visible, alive, a man in his full strength, an instant before; then for a moment his tall form swayed in the dimness of the night, and it splashed inertly into the sea. Then the *Rescue* turned over like a top. She capsized as the moon once again shone out in all her brilliancy. And before another cloud obscured the light, it shone down upon the slight keel of a flat-bottomed sailing boat, of which the centre-board had been drawn up.

* * * * *

The following afternoon the tide washed the *Rescue* ashore not far from the Worthing pier. Old Ben Boardman, who had watched for her, almost heart-broken, throughout the night, was the first to espy the wreckage floating in on the blue waters. And a dire foreboding—a memory of the phantom face which he had seen, seemingly smiling from her stern on the night previous—told him that this was what remained to him of that which had been his pride.

When they hauled her high and dry, they discovered the body of a woman whose skirts were twisted tightly in and out of the main sheet.

Ben Boardman staggered back with a hard, dry sob. The face was pressed close against the stern sheets, but it was no longer looking towards him, the eyes no longer shone, and the lips were not now red, as he had seen them. For the eyes were wide open, staring, glassy, sightless, and the lips were black as night.

He bent forward and reverently kissed the bruised fingers, as the knot of fishermen raised the still form and carried it up the beach.

Then he staggered to his little cabin in the side street, and, taking a roll of bank-notes from an old, spoutless tea-pot, he calmly struck a lucifer and applied the light to them, watching the flame intently until every vestige of the paper had been consumed.

Afterwards he made his way to a tub at the back of his shanty and washed his wrinkled hands—honest hands they were, but he felt as though there was blood upon them.

* * * * *

The *Rescue* lay moored upon the beach. Her work was done. Never again would Ben Boardman sail her. He used to potter down to the beach day after day and sit there gazing seaward; and he watched the pride of his heart gradually breaking up, falling asunder, under the fierce beat of the rays of the summer sun and the wearing lash of the waves and the ruthless hand of time.

One morning, after a storm, the *Rescue* was nowhere to be seen. Only a few planks, rotten to the core, bestrewed the beach.

Ben Boardman hobbled down to his accustomed resting place and perceived what had befallen the boat.

He found a rusty ring-bolt beneath the breakwater. This he took home with him.

A neighbour found him the next day, stretched cold and stiff, with the ring-bolt clasped tightly in his hand, and a smile, as of glad recognition, upon his wrinkled face.

W. Keppel Honnywill.

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MY LAST GAME OF CHESS.

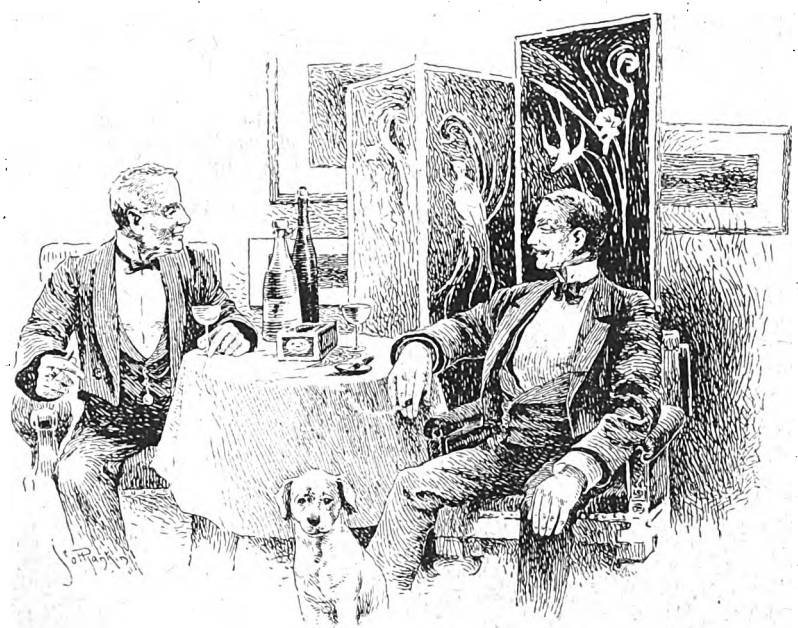
"DO you mean to say, Doctor, that you have introduced chess among your patients?"

"Yes. Why not? Some of these poor creatures, although they suffer from various forms of madness, are able at times to exercise certain faculties of mind with a brilliancy that is really remarkable."

"But surely they are not capable of playing a rational and sustained game?"

"Oh, yes! I have myself, though you know me to be a fairly good player, been beaten by a mad patient. Of course, at times, their play is whimsical and erratic; but even then, if I may say so, there is often a good deal of method in their madness. It is rather curious that at the present time I have under my charge a poor fellow whose mental derangement is almost entirely the result of excessive chess-playing. He indulged in his favourite pastime to such an extent that it ultimately affected his mind.

"We do not allow him even the sight of a chessboard, because anything to do with the game seems to rouse in him the worst form of his madness. Sometimes he will sit for hours playing with an imaginary opponent, and whenever he has these fits he always ends by exclaiming: 'Mate in six moves!' He then deliberately counts the six moves aloud, and when in his disordered imagination he has made the final move, he becomes very violent, and is then dangerous to himself and other people. He was a remarkably brilliant blindfold player, but whether he actually retains the power of mentally working out a game I am unable to say."



We were spending the evening very pleasantly.

The speakers were myself and Dr. Chorley, the famous "mad doctor," whose private asylum was generally recognised as one of the best institutions of the kind in Europe. My friend, the expert in insanity, I should here interpolate, is not really called Chorley, but for the purpose of this little story I have so chosen to style him. I was staying a few days with the Doctor, and we had been spending the evening very pleasantly over a game or two of chess. We had finished our play, and the Doctor was telling me a few things concerning his patients, in the course of which he narrated an anecdote about a game of chess played by two of the inmates of his asylum, which led to the conversation above recorded.

Shortly afterwards the Doctor retired for the night, leaving me alone to write a few letters which I was anxious to get off the first thing the next morning. For several minutes I went on smoking my cigar, turning over in my mind the idea of mad people playing chess, and then settled down to my letters.

I had not been writing long when I heard the handle of the door turn and someone come in.

I looked up, expecting to see Dr. Chorley, but to my surprise a complete stranger stood before me. "Oh!" I thought, "one of the Doctor's assistants whom I have not happened to meet before;" but it certainly struck me as rather strange that he should have entered my host's private study at the time when the rest of the household were in bed, for the Doctor, on bidding me good-night, had told me I was the last up.

I naturally waited a moment for my visitor to speak, expecting he would apologise for the intrusion, or at any rate explain his presence. To my utter surprise, however, he stood perfectly motionless, fixed his eyes upon me, and remained silent.

"Whoever you are," I thought, "you are a pretty cool customer," and feeling annoyed at what seemed to me the fellow's insolence, I said, with some dignity: "I don't understand——"

"You play chess?" he interrupted, without apparently noticing that I had attempted to speak, and all the time keeping his eyes fixed upon me.

This was certainly extraordinary, and as I looked at my strange visitor the truth all at once seemed to dawn upon me—the man was mad!

I am not naturally nervous, but I must confess to feeling something akin to fear when I realised that I

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was face to face with a man who, for all I knew, might be a dangerous lunatic.

My worst anticipations were soon realised. Without taking his eyes off me he walked to the mantelpiece and deliberately took up the large revolver which the Doctor always kept at hand in case of a surprise, and which I knew to be loaded.

My unwelcome guest had certainly now the best of the position. What was I to do? To make a bolt of it would be to offer myself a target to this homicidal madman; to shout for help might equally be the signal for him to send a bullet through me; and yet I would not stand still and be shot like a rat in a hole.

"I must humour him," I thought, "and so gain time, as his absence must soon be discovered."

My mind, however, was somewhat relieved when he repeated, in the same quiet tone of voice:

"You play chess?"

It was something, at any rate, to know that I was not to be instantly shot.

"Yes," I replied in my most winning manner. "Would you like a game?"

Without speaking, he sat down in front of me, carefully placing the pistol on the table, near his right hand.

When the pieces were arranged, he looked at me with a most diabolical expression on his face, and said:

"You will play for your life. If I win, I shall shoot you on the spot; if I lose, I shall kill myself," and he deliberately examined the revolver, as if to assure himself that it was loaded.

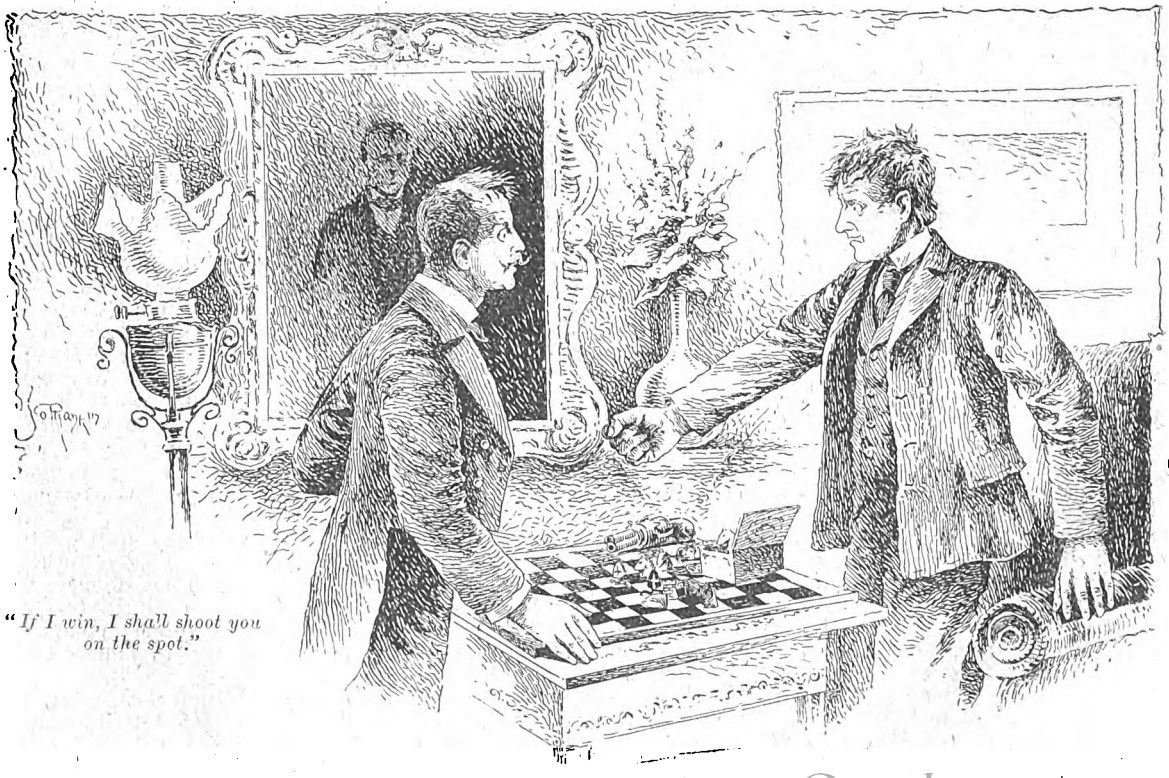
The reader will imagine what my feelings were on hearing this ultimatum. Imagine sitting down at a chess table at midnight with an armed lunatic, who tells you in terrible earnest that he will murder you if he beats you. What a fiendish whim! Under ordinary circumstances, I knew I was liable to make mistakes, and lose a game against an inferior player, but it is difficult to describe what I felt at being obliged to play, when a false move might cost me my life.

A hundred thoughts flashed through my brain. Could my grim and terrible opponent really play an accurate game? If he could, should I be able to make a stand against him till some one came to my rescue? Even if I could beat him, what guarantee had I that my life would not still be in danger? And, besides, I was morally bound to prevent, if possible, the man taking his own life.

I looked up at him. His eyes were fixed upon the board with a terrible stare, and there appeared to be no escape from the awful ordeal of being forced to stake my life on a game of chess.

Without consulting me he selected the white pieces and moved first. He played what chess players call an irregular opening, but there was nothing very remarkable or fantastic about it. I tried to keep cool, but as I lifted the pieces my hand trembled and my head felt on fire.

I soon discovered that my opponent knew perfectly well what he was doing, and that whatever the particular form his madness might take, it did not prevent him from playing the game accurately and in earnest. He quickly forced an exchange of pieces to his own advantage, and secured a vigorous attack upon my king. The position, no doubt, was a simple one to defend, but my feelings had been wrought up to such a state of excite-



"If I win, I shall shoot you on the spot."

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ment that I seemed incapable of analysing the most ordinary combinations.

Suddenly I was startled by my opponent almost hissing between his teeth:

"Mate in six moves!"

Good heavens! This, then, was the man of whom my host had been talking. A cold shiver ran through me. The terrible words: "Mate in six moves," sounded in my ears like a death-knell.

"What did they mean?" I asked myself. "Did the demented wretch see his way clear to force a mate in six moves, in spite of anything I could do? Or was he only uttering an expression he was in the habit of using, which had no significance for the game we were engaged in?"

Just in time to knock the would-be assassin's arm in an upward direction.

I tried to calm myself in order to examine the position on the board. So far as I could make out, it was impossible to force a mate in six moves, and except that my opponent had some advantage in the matter of attack, our positions seemed to me about equal.

After uttering the ominous words: "Mate in six moves," my opponent leant back in his chair and indulged in a series of horrible chuckles which seemed to make my blood run cold. Then resuming his former attitude, he slowly lifted his queen.

"One," he cried, as he brought the piece down with a bang which shook the table.

By making this move, he offered me a piece, which I promptly took, thinking he had made a blunder which would give me the game.

"Two," said my opponent, without a moment's hesitation, as he replaced one of my knights with his own, while I, thinking to be a piece to the good, accepted the exchange, and took his knight off the board.

The moment I had done so I realised that I had fallen into a fatal trap. It was plain that I must be mated in four moves, and without doubt this cunning madman had foreseen the mate six moves ahead.

"Three," he cried, the white queen giving check to my king.

Great beads of perspiration now began to break out on my forehead. I had lost the game, and unless someone came to my rescue, I thought I should most assuredly be killed. I pretended to be studying the position, but my head was busy trying to concoct some scheme for my escape from this terrible dilemma. Seeing, however, that my opponent was getting excited, I moved my king to the only available square.

"Four—check!" he almost shouted, as he moved his queen one square back.

My position was now desperate. I could only prolong the game by interposing my rook, and as I reluctantly pushed the piece forward, I saw with horror my opponent pick up the pistol.

"Five—check!" and away went my rook.

My king had now only one move to be followed by a checkmate. Never shall I forget what my feelings were at that moment, and now that the time for action had come I felt powerless to move hand or foot. My head seemed to reel, and almost mechanically I made my last move.

"Six—mate!" he literally shrieked, and I saw him raise the revolver on a level with my head. Instinctively I closed my eyes, and the next instant there was a loud report, and I fell to the floor unconscious.

* * * * *

"How do you feel now? You had a narrow escape."

I opened my eyes and saw Dr. Chorley bending over me.

"Is that you, Doctor?" I murmured. "Am I really alive? I thought I was dead."

"You are not only alive, but uninjured," was the comforting reply; and then my host told me that at the very moment the madman raised the revolver to fire at me he had noiselessly entered the room, and was just in time to knock the would-be assassin's arm in an upward direction, so that the weapon went off without doing more harm than a little damage to the wall. I had simply been overcome and fallen down in a dead faint, owing to the mental strain I had undergone. My opponent had been immediately overpowered by the keepers, who were waiting in readiness.

It seems that, after bidding me good-night, the Doctor had had occasion to open the sliding-door arrangement, which when closed effectually shut off the house from the asylum. By some means my mad opponent had slipped through unobserved, and made his way to the study. His absence had been discovered, and the Doctor and his assistants had instituted a quiet and careful search, until at length, hearing a noise in the study, they made all haste there, and arrived just in time, as I believe, to save my life.

When I said good-bye to the Doctor next day I made up my mind that it would be a long time before I paid him another visit, and to this day I never sit down to a game of chess.

J. Powell Ellis.

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A Miraculous Cure.

From the French of Jean Rameau.

Dr. Guichemerre was not in a cheerful mood; fortune had frowned upon him of late and the prospect was gloomy. For forty years he had been the village doctor at Saint-Leon. Although not very learned, he had cured as many patients as most village doctors; and if there were some whom he had not cured, it was not because he had not tried. He was a worthy, conscientious man, and the inhabitants of Saint-Leon had something to thank him for, taking one thing with another. Things had gone pretty smoothly with him, and his supreme ambition, which was to become Maire of the district, had seemed very near realisation, when fortune changed her demeanour towards him.

Guichemerre was the chemist as well as the doctor of Saint-Leon. But a few months prior to the opening of this story a second-rate chemist had come and set up a shop quite close to his; and in order to impress the people whom he hoped to secure as customers, he had made a fine display of drugs, patent medicines, hair-washes and numerous other articles.

The villagers began to patronise him and took some of Guichemerre's prescriptions to be made up; the chemist at once seized the opportunity to laugh at these prescriptions—they certainly were not up-to-date, although just as efficacious as many of the modern ones—and as a consequence of this ridicule Guichemerre lost most of his profitable trade in drugs.

That was bad enough, but worse followed. A young doctor, a friend of the rival chemist, settled in Saint-Leon, and was, of course, warmly recommended to the customers of the latter. That was the finishing stroke. Guichemerre found his connection gradually going, and finally we see him moodily warming himself by the fire and wondering what was to be done.

On this particular winter morning his sadness was several degrees deeper than it had been at any time previously; and for this reason:

Among the few of his customers who had remained faithful to their old doctor was the policeman. This official had a little boy of three, who was the playmate of Guichemerre's grandson, and had become such a favourite with the doctor that the old man had treated him almost like a grandchild. Well, this child had been ill for four days, and Guichemerre had not been summoned to attend Robert. Was even the policeman going to throw him over for this Doctor Preville, in spite of all the kindness which he had shown to him and his little boy?

For three days Guichemerre had not had a patient, and during all that time he had been constantly on the watch and the listen for the policeman. And this, the fourth, day promised to be a repetition of the preceding three.

Guichemerre arose from his chair and paced up and down, stopping occasionally to look out of the window to see if the policeman was coming. Suddenly he heard the thud of a horse's hoofs on the hard ground; he hurried to the window just in time to see Dr. Preville dash past on a prancing horse in the direction of the policeman's house.

So it was true! Little Robert was being attended by his successful rival! It was too hard to bear; the old man sat down heavily in his chair, covered his face with his hands and wept. It was good-bye to his dream of becoming Maire, good-bye to Saint Leon; he could no longer earn a living there, and must go away with his widowed daughter and her boy to some place where they could manage to live on what little money he had been able to save.

Four days afterwards Guichemerre returned to Saint-Leon from a journey he had undertaken. He had found a little cottage in a hamlet some miles distant, and he and his daughter were preparing to pack their things ready for removal. He had not been in the house an hour when there came a ring at the bell, and his daughter ushered in the policeman.

"Doctor," exclaimed the man, his eyes filling with tears, "we're very sorry, me and the missus. You've been very good to little Bob and we didn't ought to ha' gone to Dr. Preville. I don't know why we did go, I'm sure. But, Doctor, poor Bob's worse" (sob) "and Dr. Preville don't seem to do him no good—says as the little chap has got some dreadful complaint with a long name——we've never heard it before in these parts. Looks as if it's all up with him, poor chap" (sob) "though the doctor won't say anything. And Bob's been asking for *you*. Won't you come? Just to please *him!* Perhaps you can cure him!"

He tried to keep a stern face and make excuses; he knew nothing of the case, Dr. Preville would take it as a slight and so on; but the sorrowing father had an answer for all. Dr. Preville knew that he was going to call Dr. Guichemerre; he now felt that he had done wrong in not having the older doctor, who must know more than a young one; and much more to the same effect. So Guichemerre, who was secretly overjoyed, set off with the village constable for the sick-room.

There was no doubt that little Bob was very ill, that was quite clear; but what on earth was the matter with him? Guichemerre felt the boy's pulse, looked at his tongue, sounded him, tapped his thin body in different parts, but could arrive at no decision. He was dreadfully perplexed; there was no disease that he could perceive, yet the boy was evidently wasting away and would undoubtedly die if something were not done to rouse him and make him eat. His mother was crying and his father doing his best to keep back the tears; this naturally had a depressing effect upon the child, who had brightened up a little on the appearance of the doctor, but was now lying in a listless condition and occasionally whimpering. Something must be done to drive away those gloomy faces.

"We'll soon set him right!" said the old man cheerily. He uttered a few long medical terms so as to reassure the parents, and soon afterwards left the house to make up some medicine which would do the boy a lot of good.

"God forgive me!" murmured the doctor as he walked home. "I would give something to save him, but *I*

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don't know what ails him and I am afraid he will not recover!"

Actuated by a desire to save the boy for the parents' sake, Guichmerre, whose preparations for removal were suspended, did all he possibly could. He went two or three times each day, he changed the medicine, and he offered up earnest prayers on the child's behalf; but neither the one nor the other made any apparent difference; at the end of three days there was no improvement and the doctor was at his wits' end.

In the meantime some of his former patients came back to him. The fact that Dr. Preville no longer attended Bob and that Dr. Guichemerre was curing him—so the rumour ran—operated in favour of the latter. It was a terribly anxious time for Guichemerre. If the boy recovered, what happiness for the parents, what honour for himself! If he died—the doctor shuddered at the thought!

On the fourth day the doctor would not allow the parents to be in the room while he was examining the child. The fact was, he wished to hide from them that he could do nothing; he was afraid that they would see through his ruses, and would give way to grief when they learnt the truth, and thus, perhaps, spoil what little chance still remained of saving the boy. He must be alone, he said; he was going to treat the boy in a special manner—an invention of his own.

He shut the door and locked it. Then he sat down by the child's bedside and began to talk to him in an aimless way; he did not know what else to do. He had a box with him. A friend had sent a present—a toy—for his grandson, and he had been to the railway station to fetch it.

He thought he might as well open the box and see what it contained. It would serve to while away the fifteen minutes or so which he usually stayed in the room, and Bob might like to see the toy.

It was a splendid toy engine, going by clockwork, and, (according to a card in the box) at certain intervals it would give a shrill little whistle. It was so beautifully made, that Guichemerre held it up to admire it, and forgot his patient until reminded of his presence by an exclamation of delight. Turning to the boy, he saw that his face was animated with excitement, the first real sign of life since he had first attended the child. The doctor started as an idea flashed across his mind.

"Isn't it pretty?" he asked, holding it in front of the child, whose eyes were lighted up by a pleased expression. Little Bob looked at it and touched it.

"Does it go along by itself?" he inquired.

"Of course it does!" replied Guichemerre. "You just watch!"

There was a long bench-like table under the window. The doctor quickly cleared it and dragged it across the uncarpeted floor to the bedside. A few turns of the key, and the engine ran along the table, a piping whistle coming from it every few seconds. The boy shrieked with delight and tried to raise himself in the bed; Guichemerre propped him up and started the engine again.

This continued for about ten minutes, when the doctor felt that he must desist or the little patient would be over-excited. The difference in Bob's appearance was astounding, and when the worthy medico left the room (after having put everythin g straight, and wrapped up the toy) he was able to say, with perfect truth, in answer to the perplexed inquiries of the parents: "He's much better this morning."

He hurried home and made up a tonic; then he wrote a letter to the friend in Paris, who had sent the toy-engine.

When Guichemerre paid his second visit, towards evening, he found the policeman and his wife delighted and astonished at the change in the child's condition. He was so much brighter, and had begun to eat his food as though he wanted it. They were, however, anxious about one thing: Bob had been talking a great deal about something they could not understand. "It goes round." "It whistles," and several other things. They hoped his brain was not affected.

"He's all right in the head," returned the doctor. "Take no notice of what he says, only see that he takes the tonic. I will not see him again to-day, in case my new treatment excites him." He was glad that they had not guessed the truth.

The next day the same thing took place. The parents got no nearer the truth, probably because Bob, being more accustomed to the toy, did not say so much. The policeman and his wife did not worry themselves much about what little he did say; they saw that he was getting slowly better, and they had the doctor's assurance that Bob's head was all right.

The following day Guichemerre had a new toy, and afterwards he took them alternately. This went on for some days, Bob's condition improving daily. At last, one morning the doctor made such a noise amusing his patient—who was by that time almost convalescent—that the perplexed father and mother tried the door and, finding it unlocked, came hurrying into the room.

Guichemerre uttered an exclamation of fright, scrambled the engine into the box and, giving a confused reply to the question as to whether anything was wrong, simply bolted from the house.

For the first time he realised the ridiculous position he was in. Everybody in the place believed that he was treating Bob according to some new system of medicine—he had said "an invention of his own"—and he had simply been playing with a toy. He could never face his patients again; he would be the laughing stock of Saint-Leon.

But that evening he was set at rest by a visit from the schoolmaster.

"I am an occasional contributor to a scientific journal in Paris, Dr. Guichemerre," said the schoolmaster, "and I have come to ask you if you will be so good as to let me examine that wonderful invention which has enabled you to cure the policeman's son. I am convinced that a description of such an apparatus, accompanied by the details of your mode of treatment which I hope you will give me, will be read with the greatest interest."

He bowed. Dr. Guichemerre had hard work to preserve his gravity. But he was relieved of all anxiety; it was clear that the parents of little Bob had not seen enough of the toy to distinguish it, and were of opinion that it was some surgical or similar apparatus.

"I am exceedingly sorry that I cannot oblige you," replied the doctor, "but I am unable, for important reasons, to make the invention public just now. I hope to explain all that is new in my treatment at a meeting of the College of Surgeons in due course."

* * * * *

I have just heard from Saint-Leon that Dr. Guichemerre, the Maire, will be the popular candidate at the next Parliamentary election, and that he will certainly be elected.

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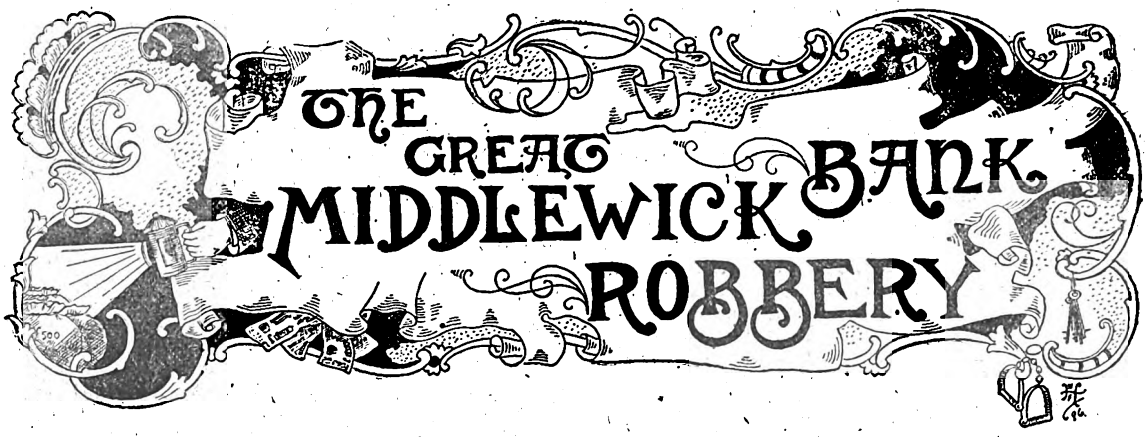

SUMMARY.

Mr. Bryant, *Manager of Middlewick Bank.*
Herbert Stewart, *Cashier.*
Frank Rutherford, *Book-keeper.*
Alfred Taylor, *Detective.*
John Warren, *Old Watchman.*
Jack Burton, *New Watchman—a detective in disguise.*
Miss Denton, *Bryant's niece, and in love with Rutherford.*

£20,000 is stolen from the Bank one night while John Warren is asleep. The only persons apparently aware of the key to the combination lock are Mr. Bryant and Mr. Stewart. Taylor is led to suspect Frank Rutherford of having obtained the key to the lock, and shadows him. It appears that an attempt is to be made on the strong room by three notorious burglars—Nash, King, and Birch—who know nothing about the previous robbery. Arrangements are made to capture them, and two constables—Bates and Morton—are to be placed in the building, while Taylor and Burton watch outside.

CHAPTER VII.

They have Come at Last.

The police superintendent of Middlewick not only knew when to hold his peace but made no mistake when he selected the police officers, Bates and Morton, to assist in capturing the criminals who had plotted to rob the town bank. The chosen men were big, strong, courageous fellows, possessing good judgment.

Precisely at nine o'clock they walked slowly past the institution in which they were to spend the night. Their acquaintances whom they met nodded in friendly recognition, but observed nothing in the manner of the couple to suggest that anything unusual was on their minds.

When in front of the building, Bates, who was walking on the outside edge of the pavement, said in a low tone, referring to Burton:

"He's there."

"I won't turn my head. Is he looking this way?"

"He doesn't seem to be, but we can't tell at this distance."

"It's time he raised his hat, if he's going to."

"He isn't; something's wrong."

Bates was right; the new watchman strolled past, as though in a brown study, and, turning the first corner, disappeared. It was evident he had discovered something suspicious. What it was none but he could say, but it must have been unmistakable, else he would have made the signal agreed upon.

Neither of the officers knew the suspected parties, though both had fixed upon a couple of strangers in the town as likely to be members of the trio.

Without any change of pace or manner, Bates and Morton strolled down the street and out towards the outskirts of the town.

"Here comes one of them," remarked Morton in an undertone.

He referred to a tall, well-dressed man, approaching on the same side of the street at a leisurely pace.

"Thank goodness here's another day nearly over," said Bates, "I shall be only too thankful to get home to-night. I'm dead beat. What do you mean to do to-night?"

"As soon as we're off duty I must stay at the station awhile, and then I, too, shall turn in for the night."

The brief conversation was apparently without point or interest, but really it was intended for the benefit of the approaching man, whom both believed to be one of the criminals. The words were so timed that the stranger must have heard them all, and doubtless gained the impression they meant him to gain.

As soon as they were beyond earshot Bates remarked:

"I bet you what you like that's Sam Birch."

"What makes you think that?"

"That new watchman said he's cross-eyed; didn't you notice it?"

"Yes."

"That settles it."

"You're right, I expect, for he's certainly a stranger to Middlewick. Pretty bright fellow that new watchman, Bates."

"Yes; he must be getting good wages to take old Warren's place."

"Wonder if he'll stop long," Morton added.

"Perhaps a week or so—that is, until this job is finished."

They laughed again. Evidently they had their own theories as to the personality of Jack Burton.

Their leisurely walk had brought the policemen out opposite to Mr. Bryant's private residence. The lower part was lighted up, and at the moment of passing Frank Rutherford entered the gate and walked briskly up the gravelled walk which led to the door.

"He's rather late calling," remarked Bates.

"He'll remedy that by taking longer," observed his companion, and no other reference was made to the matter. The words showed the general view in which the young couple were regarded in Middlewick.

Time was getting on, and the officers once more turned in the direction of the bank. Before coming in sight of it they encountered the cross-eyed man again, but this time he was on the opposite side of the street. They gave him no apparent attention, nor did he manifest any interest in them.

"He's been to see if everything's all right," hazarded Bates, a view in which his companion agreed.

"Hulloa!" whispered Morton, "what's the meaning of this?"

A few yards in front of them, walking in the same direction, was the watchman from whom they had taken their final directions. Where he came from neither could say. Though he did not look round, nor seem to be aware of the proximity of the policemen, the latter knew there was no mistake in the matter. He was certain they were behind him and his presence was no accident.

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"He's been shadowing Birch," observed Bates.

"Risky business, for Birch might turn the tables."

"The new watchman knows a thing or two."

If Burton wished to be joined by the policeman he would slacken his pace. If he desired to increase the distance between him and themselves, he would walk faster. He did neither, therefore they knew he wished things to remain as they were. In the same aimless fashion the watchman strolled on, turning several times before he reached the street leading to the bank.

Bates glanced at his watch.

"Twelve minutes past nine," he said; "he'll reach the corner punctually at the quarter."

"Yes, and we'll get the signal this time for certain."

"I expect so, as Birch is out of the way, unless," added Bates, "my gentleman takes it into his head to have another look round."

Morton glanced over his shoulder. Nothing was to be seen of the burly criminal with whom they expected soon to have a struggle.

Bates was right. As the town clock was chiming the quarter past the hour, Jack Burton walked past the bank on the opposite side of the street. While the eyes of both the men were on him he raised his hand and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

It was the pre-arranged signal.

Without glancing either to the right or to the left, to make sure everything was right, Bates, in the most natural manner, turned slightly to the right, and, in the most natural manner, ascended the steps to the bank. His companion did the same, and was at his elbow when the former grasped the brass knob of the outer door. The next instant an impatient exclamation escaped him.

The door was locked.

For some cause old Warren had secured the fastening against any unexpected intrusion. Thus the first step in the drama was a slip. Nothing of the kind had been counted on, for the watchman had instructions to leave the door unlocked from half-past eight until ten o'clock. He had understood it, and his blunder was unintelligible.

The situation was trying in the extreme. To stand there rattling the door was sure to attract the attention of passers-by and disarrange the programme, while to go away would be every inch as bad, since the same difficulty would still confront them.

"What's to be done?" asked the perplexed Bates, his hand still on the knob.

"I'm blessed if I know, unless——"

"Kick at the door till you wake him! He's in there asleep!"

The words were uttered by some one passing the building. The person did not look at them while making the suggestion, but the men recognised him at a glance as Burton.

Bates followed instruction. He rattled the door harder than ever, and, raising his heavy boot, delivered a kick that threatened to carry the structure off its hinges.

Immediate results followed. The key turned in the lock, and the door opened and the scared face of the old watchman peered out at them.

"Bless me! what's the matter, officers?" he asked in a shaking voice.

The policemen stepped quickly inside, and locked the door behind them.

"You idiot!" said Morton angrily; "what do you mean by having that door locked?"

"Why, gentlemen, them's my instructions," was the wondering reply, as the old man stood before them, plainly revealed in the dim light of the several gas jets that were kept burning all night.

"Weren't you told to leave it unlocked until we came?"

The watchman scratched his head meditatively.

"Bless me, so I was; but really it slipped my mind. I hope you will excuse me, gentlemen."

"Why didn't you open the door before? We've been trying to get in for the last five minutes or more."

"I heard you, gentlemen, but you see my rheumatiz makes me move so slow that——"

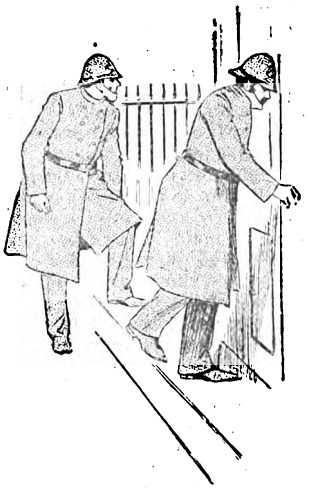
"Oh! be quiet; go and finish your sleep if you want to, but don't bother us any more."

The watchman apparently thought it best to obey the instructions of the officer of the law, especially as they were given in so decided a tone. He walked to the settee where he had been reclining and sat down with folded arms, his gaze following the figures of the two policemen. He wondered what they intended to do. They had not offered any explanation, nor did he dare ask for any, but he determined to find out.

He sat for several minutes bolt upright. That position, however, soon became tiresome, and he assumed an easier one. By-and-bye, he shifted again, and then—the natural consequences followed—he sank into a deep sleep.

Meanwhile the two policemen lost no time. Although the visitors were not expected for several hours, the couple arranged matters as though they were liable to drop in at any moment, which indeed may be said to have been the fact.

The vault was at the back of the large business-room of the building, being let into the solid wall, so that when the door was closed a comparatively even surface was presented. It was secured by the new combination, known only to the manager and cashier.



He rattled the door harder than ever.

The only other room used by the institution was reached, as has already been explained, by passing along the side of the business portion still further to the rear. All the blinds were down, so that no one could overlook the building at night from the street.

Bates and Morton spent several minutes familiarising themselves with the building. With the more public portion of the bank they were comparatively familiar, but the manager's room was, of course, new ground to them.

"Here is the place to wait," remarked Bates, as they reached this apartment, and turning the manager's chair round from the desk he proceeded to make himself as comfortable as possible.

His companion likewise assumed an easy posture near him, for they had nothing to do now but await the arrival of their visitors. That they would certainly present themselves before morning neither felt the least doubt.

Excepting the large clock fastened against the wall, the two men were quite alone, but the very ticking which at first had given them such a sense of companionship at last became a source of irritation. It seemed as though its hands would never move, and they could easily have cheated themselves into believing it had suspended business for the evening, had it not been for the monotonous sound it gave forth.

Outside the footsteps of the passers-by echoed loudly as they passed the corner, the numbers gradually growing fewer as the night progressed.

Bates, half in earnest, insisted now and then that he recognised certain persons by the peculiarity in the noise made by their feet.

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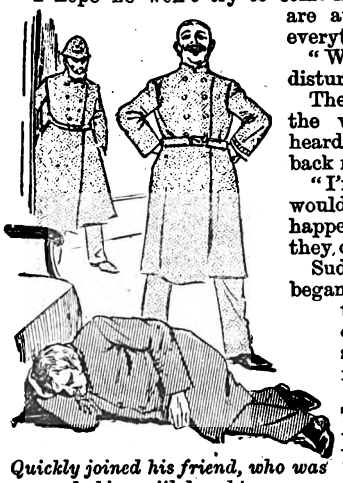
"That's the guv'nor," he suddenly whispered; "I'm certain I've not made a mistake about *him!*"

The doubting Morton softly rose and peered round the edge of the curtain.

"You're right," he said, coming back to his seat; "he's interested in this affair."

"I hope he won't try to come inside to see whether we are awake. It might spoil everything."



Quickly joined his friend, who was shaking with laughter.

"Worse than that, it would disturb Warren."

The regular breathing of the watchman was plainly heard by the couple in the back room.

"I'm glad he's asleep; he would kick up a row if he happened to be awake when they came."

Suddenly the town clock began striking eleven. Morton looked up at the face of the office clock, and saw that it was exactly right.

"I hoped it was later. This is tiresome. I wish those fellows would keep better hours."

The policeman rose, yawned, stretched his massive limbs, and then sat down again.

"They'll make up for lost time when they do arrive," was the comment of his comrade.

"I shouldn't be at all surprised if they pay their visit a little earlier than the new watchman anticipates. This is a sleepy town, and eleven o'clock here counts the same as a couple of hours later in London, or up North."

"Yes, and they'll need a considerable time to finish the work. Not knowing the combination, they must use powder or dynamite."

"Not necessarily, I think. The safe you must remember is an old-fashioned one, and they'll probably bore through the outer door as though it were made of wood, for such adepts as they must be from what Warren told us are sure to be up to every dodge, and won't make any mistake."

"Except in not counting on our being here."

Both started from their chairs and stared questionably at each other. At that moment a heavy fall was heard in the outer room.

"H'sh!" whispered Bates, rising softly and gently opening the door. He went out on tiptoe, while Morton stationed himself by the partly-opened inner door so as to be ready to go to his companion's assistance the instant he was needed.

"Come here, Morton," Bates called in an undertone.

The other quickly joined his friend, who was shaking with laughter.

Warren's sleep could not have been dreamless, for he had rolled from the settee to the floor, where he mutteringly adjusted himself and resumed his slumber.

"We may as well let him lie where he is," said Bates, "though I meant at first to lift him back again."

"You might stand him on his head and he would continue to sleep. Leave him alone—H'sh!"

Someone had paused outside the building, as if about to enter. The policemen quietly hastened back to their former positions, on the alert for their visitors.

But it was a false alarm. The halt by the one outside meant nothing. He resumed his walk and passed on.

It was now half-past eleven, and the crisis could not be far off. Bates believed the criminals would not wait many minutes longer, for the streets were as deserted as they were likely to be for a full hour or more. Morton was inclined to think the superintendent was poking about, and had made a move to learn whether the officers were prepared; but Bates thought different. Such a course on his part would not be in keeping with his usual good sense.

But the long minute hand of the clock slowly climbed round the face until it reached the last quarter, where it seemed to stop. Then it struggled free and worked slowly upwards. But still the visitors came not.

Someone walked rapidly past the window, and all again became silent outside. The voice of a person calling to another, probably across the street, was heard, followed by the reply of the second one. The watchers might well have imagined they were in some deserted residence, miles out in the country, beyond the reach of any friendly or unfriendly callers.

The ticking of the clock grew louder than before. The men had ceased conversing and were listening. All at once the town clock began booming forth the hour of midnight, each stroke ringing out loud and clear on the still air. At the same moment a slight noise was heard in the outer room. Between the strokes it was so distinct that the watchers recognised its meaning.

Someone was working at the lock of the door.

The noise continued after the booming of the clock had ceased. It was so well defined that no mistake could be made as to its meaning.

"It's the burglars," whispered Morton; "they have come at last."

He spoke the truth.

CHAPTER VIII.

Two Shadowy Figures Passed up the Steps.

Strange as it may seem, both the detective and the watchman were more afraid of several other persons than of the men who they were certain had planned to rob the Middlewick Bank that evening. Not afraid in the usual sense of the term, but the two dreaded that their own friends, through over zeal, would disarrange the plans formed with so much care.

The one who caused the most misgiving was the bank manager, Mr. Bryant. He had visited the bank the previous evening at an unseasonable hour, and was liable to repeat the act. If he did so before the appearance of the criminals, they would keep out of the way and probably give up the job. If he called while they were at their work, he ran the risk of being murdered. How to prevent his repeating his visit was a delicate and difficult question.

"You must look out for him during the first half of the night, so that if he appears you can turn him back."

"On what pretext?" asked Taylor.

"On what pretext?" asked Taylor.

"He expressed himself satisfied last night with his inspection. You can manage to meet him while he is yet a good distance from the building, and say that if his new watchman finds himself under suspicion of incompetence after having received assurance to the contrary, he will be offended and leave his employ."

"Perhaps he will not care if he does."

"He will not want me to go in the night time, as you can assure him I will do if interfered with by him again."

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"Suppose he takes a walk abroad and happens to meet you?"

"I will take good care that he doesn't do that, if you will only keep him away from the bank."

"What will he think when he learns that Warren is back at his old place?"

"He can't learn it before to-morrow, and then it will be easy to explain matters to him."

The other individuals who caused misgiving to Taylor and Burton were the police Superintendent and his policemen.

Respecting the latter, the question was as to their fitness to face the burglars; but, as that question must arise regarding whoever took their places, it caused less concern than the fear about the manager.

The Superintendent was certain to remain on the alert all night. He had informed the couple of his intention in that respect. Indeed, it would have been strange considering his position, if he had gone home to sleep knowing the town was to be racked by such an unprecedented earthquake within a few hours.

Whether he knew it or not the policeman spoke truly when he laughingly said he recognised the Superintendent's footsteps among those of the passers-by. It was not until he had passed the building for the third time that Burton met him at a safe distance and begged him to refrain, since, if he did not, the whole scheme would fall through. Superintendent Dixon was sensible enough to accept the protest, and did as requested.

It now began to look as if matters would be carried out according to programme. Mr. Bryant, as Burton believed, was under the eye of the detective, who would keep him at a distance. As it was still early, the new watchman had considerable leisure on his hands, so he concluded to visit the vicinity of Mr. Bryant's residence. The precise point where Taylor had agreed to keep his beat until half-past eleven had been settled, so that Burton knew where to look for him.

The locality was so retired that the friends could meet and compare notes without attracting attention. The watchman was especially desirous of seeing Taylor, as, since they had parted company, he had made a discovery with which the detective should be made acquainted at the earliest possible moment.

This was nothing less than the presence of a fourth member of the law-breakers, in the person of Bobby Roberts, who Burton supposed doing time in Portland to which he had been sentenced several years before. But here he was in Middlewick, and had therefore served out his imprisonment, and had been pardoned, or made his escape from gaol.

But a most unpleasant surprise awaited Burton at the lonely corner where the detective ought to have been idling his time. Neither he, nor anyone else was in sight, and though the watchman went over the entire beat he met only three strangers.

"This is extraordinary," he thought, with a thrill of misgiving.

It struck him as probable that his friend, in order to make sure the Manager did not escape him, had called at his house. It would never have done for Burton to show himself at "Glenmora" at an hour when duty required him to be at the bank. There was nothing, however, to prevent a reconnaissance by him.

Accordingly, he strolled past the handsome residence, scrutinising it from the opposite side of the street. It was wrapped in darkness; not a glimmer came from any portion. The owner was asleep, and Alfred Taylor was somewhere else.

Trying not to believe anything was amiss until he received proof of it, Burton now went back over the ground where his friend should have been. Not a glimpse of him was to be seen.

"It maybe he has made the same discovery as I and is looking for me," was the next thought of the watchman. "He knows where to find me."

All in vain. The detective was gone for the time, and the new watchman was at loss to understand it.

Burton's beat was a little way down the street at the opposite side of the corner of which the bank stood. No position could be more favourable, for by the aid of the moonlight and the street lamps, he not only had the front of the bank under his eye but could detect the approach of anyone, no matter from what direction he came.

He passed near the doorway where Burton stood.

A convenient doorway gave him all the shelter he needed, and the distance was so short that he could reach the bank within a few seconds after being summoned.

His first purpose was to locate Mr. Sam Birch, whom he was confident was to stand guard outside. If both he and Burton should happen to take the same vantage ground, an awkward complication was likely to follow; but he would not be likely to do that, for it would have been contrary to custom. He needed to be much nearer the bank, to give warning of the approach of danger and afford his confederates time to escape, or at least to cease their operations until the peril of discovery passed.

The town clock had just finished striking eleven when a figure came in sight which the watchman recognised as Sam Birch. He passed so near the doorway where Burton stood in the shadow that discovery seemed certain. Had it taken place it must have exerted a marked influence over what followed.

Had the criminal done his whole duty, he assuredly must have observed that shadowy form which once was within a few feet of him; but as he passed by, at a deliberate pace, his gaze remained fixed on the corner where stood the building to be plundered.

If any danger threatened, he expected it much nearer to the bank than was the watchman. So he went on, and *that* peril was over.

Never pausing to look back, Birch walked on, finally disappearing round the corner.

"He has found everything favourable," was the conclusion of the watchman, who was so well convinced that the burglary would not be attempted before midnight that he did not hesitate to leave his post.

Despite his certainty that a stirring encounter was imminent, Jack Burton was more disturbed at that moment because of the unaccountable absence of his friend Taylor than he was by the presence of the criminal quartette. Somehow he could not help associating the disappearance of the detective with the discovery of Roberts, the fourth member of the company.

Moving out, therefore, from his hiding-place, the watchman walked quickly to the corner where Taylor had agreed to look out for Mr. Bryant. He was to remain there until half-past eleven, before it would be considered safe to leave the manager to himself.

It would be hard to picture the increased misgiving of the watchman when he learnt that his friend was still absent. Unquestionably he had not been at his post that evening.

"The pitcher can go to the well once too often," was Burton's melancholy conclusion; "but I hope it won't prove so in this case. One man more or less doesn't make much difference in the world, but Alf is too good a fellow to be spared. Where the deuce can he and Roberts be?"

Upon his return to his own station, Burton went over the

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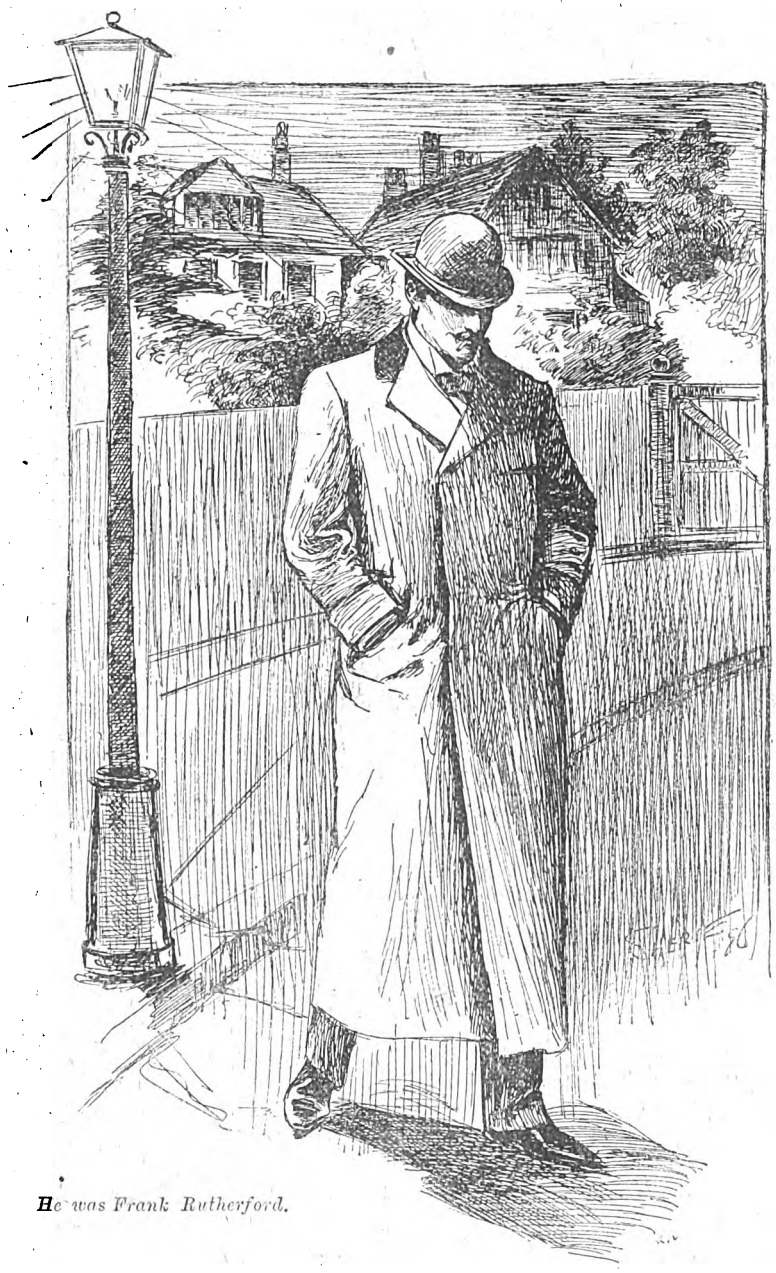

He was Frank Rutherford.

same ground as before, so that he passed Mr. Bryant's residence. It was still shrouded in darkness, as it had been for the last two hours.

The watchman had not been given as favourable an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the little town of Middlewick as had the detective. When, therefore, he observed a light shining from the upper room of a small building standing a little way back from the street he had no suspicion to whom it belonged.

The fact was noticeable because it was the only house in the immediate neighbourhood which showed that anyone was astir within. To one of Burton's observant nature the trifling fact had a meaning at this time which he would have liked to determine.

"Someone may be ill," he reflected, "but I believe that gas turned up to the highest point has something to do with the Middlewick Bank burglary or with the absence of Alfred Taylor."

Time was precious but he could not forbear lingering and watching for a few minutes.

The little street was so retired that the glare of the lamp and the light of the moon failed to show any person stirring; save for the presence of the watchman, the street was deserted.

But the conditions changed the next minute. Someone came round the corner from the direction of Mr. Bryant's home, walking quickly. The watchman resumed his progress, but so slowly that he was sure of being overtaken before going more than a few rods beyond the cottage in which the light was burning.

His hearing enabled him to locate the other person without looking round. The better to conceal his identity, Burton assumed a limp and raised one shoulder, taking care to do so before the other had a chance of noting the change.

Suddenly the sound of the footfalls on the pavement stopped. A backward glance instantly explained the cause. The man had left the flagstones, and was crossing the street diagonally. The soft earth failed to give back any sound.

He was the occupant of the house where the light was burning, and was making haste to reach his home.

The moonlight, and the glow of the lamp beneath which he passed, revealed the young man to the watchman. He was Frank Rutherford, the book-keeper of the Middlewick Bank.

"He doesn't keep good hours," was the natural thought of Burton; "but though it looks as if he was in the affair of the other night, I don't believe he's in this."

Rutherford hurriedly entered the house, ascended the stairs, and then, as his mother had done the preceding night, raised the curtain and looked out. He, too, seemed to be expecting someone who came not; but, in his case, he was looking for one whom he did not wish to see, while she had yearned for him.

The light fell so fully upon him that his face, shoulders, and the upper part of his body were clearly revealed. The watchman had made himself acquainted with the appearance of all the employés of the bank, so that the first glance identified the book-keeper.

"I don't wonder Bryant's niece is infatuated with him; he's handsome enough to turn the head of any girl."

Rutherford waited but a few minutes, little dreaming that anyone was observing him from the street below. Then down went the curtain, and in a brief while the light was turned out.

Burton glanced at his watch.

"Ten minutes to twelve!" he exclaimed. "I have no business here, but if I knew of any way to help poor Alf I would let the bank go, if the gang carried off the building itself."

There was no risk in walking quickly, and he hurried on until he reached the position he had vacated nearly half-an-hour before.

The most careful scrutiny of his surroundings failed to

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show anything out of the usual course. But the change came quickly.

The people in the street were so few that it was easy to distinguish each as he came in sight. The figure of a tall man strolled past the bank, just as it had done earlier in the evening.

Sam Birch was taking his last survey, preparatory to signalling to his companions that the coast was clear.

To the astonishment of the watchman, the man, instead of turning to one side, as he had done before, came directly towards him.

"Confound it!" muttered Burton; "this means detection, without fail."

He would have slipped away had the chance been given, but to emerge from his shelter and hurry off would be the worst possible move he could have made. The suspicious criminal would know like a flash what it meant. All that Burton could do was to stay where he was and meet the crisis, as he had met many others.

The act of Birch puzzled the watchman, for it was contrary to the rules of procedure under such circumstances. His place was near the bank, where he could give timely notice to his confederates. While, as has already been shown, Burton's situation afforded this view, yet there was one direction from which he could not see a party approaching until he arrived within a few paces of the steps.

The professional detective and burglar take no chances that can be avoided by shrewdness and vigilance.

But, at the culmination of Burton's chagrin and exasperation, the wished-for change took place. Sam Birch was still several feet away when, like Frank Rutherford, he turned and crossed the street diagonally. Why this crossing of the street was made it would be difficult to explain, except upon the theory that the criminal detected something on the other side which he concluded to investigate.

The fact that he moved over a small space several times, where his actions were only dimly visible to the man shrinking in the shadows, favoured this explanation. He probably observed a likeness among the shadows which suggested a person, and Birch speedily discovered his error.

He gave a low, guarded whistle.

His next movement was more startling than any yet made.

Without the least warning, he came across the street, again making for the spot where Burton was striving to keep out of sight. Strange as it seemed to the watchman, his presence was still undiscovered. But the the miscreant was not expecting *him*, and therefore was not looking out for Burton.

Upon reaching the outer edge of the pavement, Birch turned on his heel and stood with his back to the watchman. Then he gave a low, guarded whistle.

At that moment the clock in the town hall began sounding the hour of midnight. The watchful Burton saw two shadowy figures pass up the steps of the bank and apply the key which they had ready. The door quickly opened, and they passed inside.

(To be continued.)

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ON HER TWENTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY.

THEY were sitting in the parlour of Hope's home, and for about the twentieth time he had asked her to be his wife, and had been answered "No." Proposing had become a sort of habit with Fred, so instead of running away after being rejected, he stopped to talk the matter over. Hope's attempts at consolation were now part of the regular programme.

"I am awfully sorry, Fred," she said, "but you must not be unreasonable. I feel it would be sinful for me to give up the career that lies before me. I have looked forward to the day on which I shall be of age, and mean to exercise every prerogative it brings to me." (Fred groaned.) "But I don't want this unfortunate love of yours to make us any the less friends, for I really like you very much, and we have been chums so long."

She laid her hand on his shoulder and looked down at him kindly. The touch thrilled him, and he caught her hand tenderly.

"Why do you feel that you should have a career? Why not leave that sort of thing to women who have a grievance against the world?"

"I would rather do good work myself. But why am I arguing with you? You talk just like mamma about these things."

"Do you think that your mother's life has been thrown away?"

"Our cases are altogether different. She belongs to another phase of social development. The more advanced and emancipated woman, however, does not wish to be loved; she wishes to be appreciated."

"But I appreciate you."

"Nonsense. I have never done anything to be appreciated. Some day, perhaps, you will have a chance to appreciate me."

"Will you be my wife then?"

"Dear me," she said petulantly, "I object to being proposed to twice in the same evening."

"Well, then, what are you going to do? Going to join the Woman's Suffragists?"

"No. I believe in preserving one's individuality, and the field is so wide I know I can work without trespassing on the ground of any other woman. I have mapped out my lifework. If you will call to-morrow evening, I'll tell you. I shall be a free agent then, and privileged to speak and act for myself, for I shall be twenty-one years old."

"I would rather be coming to dance at a birthday party."

"You are unkind," she said; "but I must expect unkindness as I go on with my work," and a look of firmness settled on her face. It had taken her some time to decide whether or not a slight frown was necessary to a look of firmness, but she had come to the conclusion finally, that that virtue is best expressed by closely drawn lips and a placid brow. "I refused to let them give me one, for I did not wish to begin the first day of my new and broader life with frivolity. Instead, I may perhaps get some letters from a number of earnest women to whom I sent a little circular to-day outlining the work I propose to take up."

As Fred left the house, Hope's mother said: "I do believe that he proposed again to-night, and Hope rejected him."

"Isn't that the second time you have made that observation this week?" asked her husband.

"Well, it is a shame! He is such a splendid fellow."

"Tut! Tut! The child is just a little bit flighty now, and her talk of having a 'career' is amusing rather than serious. What great work does she intend doing?"

"She will not tell me, and I am afraid she may get into trouble."

"Never fear. I enjoy seeing her assert her rights, and I prophesy that a month of freedom from the parental *potestas* will satisfy her and make her the meekest girl in London. She has too much of her mother's goodness of heart to keep up her folly long."

The look he got in response spoke volumes—volumes of a kind not found in the libraries of emancipated women.

Hope rose early the next morning She felt that she was entering upon a new era, and her heart bounded at the thought of all that being of age must mean. Her parents had always been very kind, but they had kept her from taking part in any of the women's movements with which the city was seething—from making a fool of herself they said—but now she was of age, and could gently but firmly insist on getting the few rights that law and custom allow to women.

At breakfast Hope bore her father's teasing with a stately equanimity that amused him immensely. No, she would not tell them what her work was to be; but she probably would be able to do so in the evening, after getting some letters that she expected.

There was the suggestion of a sob in her mother's voice as she said:

"My little girl never had a secret from me before."

"Now don't look at it in that way, dear," said her

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father. "Let Hope choose her own course, and if she gets into trouble she can blame no one but herself."

Hope went to her room, and, opening her dainty escritoire, tried to get her ideas into form on cream-laid paper.

Presently a maid brought up several cards. Hope read a couple:

MR. I. ROAST PERCOLLUM.
MR. S. JEROME SCORCH.

"Why," she exclaimed, "I don't know any of these people. What do they want? Where is Mamma?"

"They said it was you they wanted to see."

Then Hope remembered she was of age and decided to see them.

When she entered the drawing-room she found a group of young men looking at a painting on the wall.

"Magnificent," one of them was saying. "Notice the chiaroscuro. What an atmosphere! What——"

Her entry was noticed, and as the speaker turned to her she said:

"You wished to see me?"

The young men looked at the girl blankly.

"It is Miss Hope Ferd we wish to see," said the one who had been acting as art critic.

"That is my name."

"Perhaps there is a mistake," he said helplessly. "Haven't you a maiden aunt of the same name?"

"No."

He could hardly believe it possible. He expected to meet a severe old maid and this vision of girlish beauty staggered him, but he proceeded:

"I am Mr. Percollum of the *Evening Eclipse*, and my friends here——"

"Reporters!" gasped Hope, as she dropped into a convenient chair.

"Yes. We were calling on a prominent Woman's Suffragist this morning, and she told us she had received a letter from Miss Hope Ferd, who is organising a 'Society for the Purification of the Press.'"

"But," exclaimed Hope, "I didn't intend it to get into the papers."

"Yet a reform of that magnitude and character could hardly be achieved without the papers hearing of it sooner or later," he said, as he stole a sidelong look at Mr. Scorch of the *Evening Planet*.

Scorch fluttered his left eyelid encouragingly.

"That's so," said Hope. "I hadn't thought of that."

"We feel sure the public will be interested to know how you propose to accomplish this much-needed reform."

"Oh, horrors! I don't want to be interviewed."

"Many members of the press," interposed Scorch in terms as smooth as oil on the troubled waters, "will undoubtedly sympathise with you."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it. The way the papers are now conducted is a source of sincere regret to many of us."

She looked at the young men a little dubiously, but they were such good-natured, respectable-looking fellows, she felt reassured.

"May I inquire what made you decide to undertake this work?"

"Well, to tell the truth," she said, "papa always cut out of the papers all that he thought unfit for a young lady to read, and I made up my mind that if so much was unfit, a reform was needed. Why, some days all he left for me was the editorial page."

"That was a hardship, indeed," said Percollum with a look of concern; "I don't wonder that you felt it necessary to do something. What is your plan of campaign? Will you lecture before the Press Club?"

"Dear me! That will not be necessary, will it?"

"Not absolutely necessary; but it is the usual way of proceeding in such matters."

"Oh, I couldn't think of that!"

"Well, will you direct your attention towards reforming the managing editors or the reporters? I think a great deal might be accomplished by individual work among the reporters."

"O, I don't know yet what I shall do. My plans are not fully matured."

Finding that no definite information could be got, Percollum and Scorch began to offer suggestions, to which she listened eagerly. When the interview was ended she felt very much encouraged, and was sure that reporters were a much maligned class.

Mrs. Ferd was horrified on hearing who her daughter's callers were, for she is one of those old-fashioned women who think a woman's name should never appear in the papers except at her birth, marriage and death. But Hope soothed her fears and assured her nothing would appear in the papers about it. And the reporters were really such nice young men, there could be no harm in having a chat with them.

Nothing further happened until about five o'clock, when there was a furious ring at the door-bell. A moment later Mr. Ferd was heard roaring:

"Where is that little idiot? Hope! Hope! Where are you? Hope!"

"What is the matter, papa?" she said in alarm, as she ran to him.

"Oh, that I should be the father of such an idiot! What did you mean by talking yards of drivelling lunacy to reporters?"

"Why, they haven't put anything in the papers, have they?"

"Haven't, eh? Look here! Columns of it! You have made us the laughing stock of the town."

"And they seemed such nice young men!" she murmured, sobbing.

"Reporters nice! Aw!" and flinging the bundle of evening papers to the floor, he rushed away to commune with his brandy bottle.

Picking up the papers, Hope fled to her room. The first she looked into contained this attractive heading to a two-column article:

HOPE IN THEIR HEARTS.

PRETTY MISS FERD ORGANISES A REFORM.

DEATH TO SENSATIONALISM.

THE HYDRA-HEADED PRESS TO BE GIVEN A HAIR-CUT AND SHAMPOO.

That was enough. She threw herself on the bed and cried as if her heart was broken. She wanted to die. When her mother came up a little later and put her arms about her, Hope hid her face in her bosom and they cried together. When the culprit grew quieter, Mrs. Ferd went away feeling almost happy. The bond that bound her daughter to her was stronger than ever. She was now prepared to act as Hope's champion, and protect her from the unrighteous indignation of her father.

Finally Hope's tears were exhausted, and she began to read what the papers said about her. As she read of paragraph after paragraph of ridicule and merciless sarcasm, her shame was only equalled by her rage.

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She did not go down to dinner that evening, but when Fred's card was brought to her she hurried to the drawing-room. She did her best to look like an injured queen, yet when she saw that he was not going to laugh at her she felt a longing to hide her face on his shoulder and cry.

"You have often said that you love me," she began.

"You do not doubt that I meant it, do you?"

"Prove that you mean it by thrashing those reporters!"

"Thrashing them!"

"Yes, thrashing them!" and her rage returned. "I don't want to purify the press now! I want to annihilate it!"

"What are their names?"

"Here are their cards," and she sorted them from those on the card tray.

He took them in his hand and then hesitated. "But, what right have I to thrash them?"

"Have you not protested that you love me?"

"And you have always objected."

"I don't object now!" she murmured, half audibly.

A moment later she was sobbing on his shoulder.

The castigation of Percollum and Scorch was postponed for a couple of hours, during which the parental blessing was secured, and it was decided that Hope's twenty-first birthday should be remembered by her engagement rather than her folly. Fred finally remembered his commission, and said he must go and attend to it.

"No, no!" she cried. "You must not go and get into danger on account of my foolishness."

"Danger, nothing. You forget," he said expanding his chest, "that I was a half-back in our college football team! Danger? Nonsense!"

He looked so fine and manly and insisted so strongly that those reporters really deserved to have something done to them, she finally consented.

When he reached the street, after a peculiarly lingering farewell, he took the reporters' cards from his pocket and examined them carefully under a street lamp.

"Thrash them!" he chuckled. "Well, I guess not."

Two of the offenders were old college chums, so he sent a message to Percollum asking him to get together the fellows who were on the "Purification of the Press" assignment and join him at a Strand café. An hour later they met and set their faces resolutely towards the bar.

"Do you know her?" asked Percollum, as they fell in line.

"Sh-h-h-h! Name your poison."

Shortly after midnight the following note was posted to Hope:

My Darling.—Two of those reporters already used up. Several others badly disabled. May be exhausted myself, but hope to be sufficiently recovered by the afternoon to take you out for a drive.—Your devoted, Fred.

P. McArthur.

A STRANGE RESCUE.

Gun in hand I made my way through the tangled forest, eagerly searching for some specimens of a rare bird which I required to complete the collection I had formed of the feathered tribe since my arrival in Natal.

I had advanced a distance of a hundred or a hundred and twenty yards when I came upon a patch of "open," through which a narrow track led down to the edge of a small stream, which rippled musically over its pebbly bed. As I emerged from the thick undergrowth, an agonised moan reached my ear, and at the same instant my eye fell upon a magnificent full-grown male leopard, beautifully marked, which lay doubled up in the track, in an attitude unmistakably suggestive of acute pain.

The instinct of the sportsman instantly prompted me to raise my gun to my shoulder—to lower it again, however, the next instant. It was loaded with small shot only—too small, indeed, to penetrate the hide of the splendid creature before me; and it seemed, too, a cowardly act to take advantage of him in his helpless and suffering condition.

His eyes looked glazed and dim; his tongue, white furred and dry, hung out of his mouth, and his sides heaved painfully at every inspiration.

As I emerged from the bush, he lifted up his head and regarded me with an expression as distinctly appealing as anything I have ever yet seen, while, slightly raising his forepaw, he uttered another groan. This action attracted my attention, as I at once observed that the foot was frightfully swollen.

I can scarcely even now account for the impulse which caused me to walk quietly up to the suffering animal. It was evident the moment I approached him that part of his sufferings proceeded from thirst, aggravated intensely, no doubt, by the sight of the water which he had striven unavailingly to reach. Seeing this, I went down to the brook, and filled my pith helmet with the cool, sparkling liquid, and offered it him.

He lapped it greedily, and seemed so plainly to ask for more that I at once fetched it, and this, too, disappeared.

He now seemed much better and attempted to rise, but sank upon the ground again with a horrid howl, the moment his swollen foot touched the earth.

I allowed him to remain undisturbed for a minute or two, and then gently took his paw in my hand, to examine it: my patient, as I may now call him, offering me no resistance beyond a faint whine. I saw at once that the poor brute was suffering from a very large and painful gathering in the ball of the foot, and that it would afford him immediate relief to have it opened.

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But how would he be inclined to behave under the operation? I asked myself. The chances were that the pain would arouse him to a pitch of ungovernable fury, in which case I should stand but a poor chance in a struggle with him.

While I was hesitating as to whether I should run the risk or not, he again looked up into my face with such a pitiful beseeching expression that it was simply irresistible.

I drew out my knife—which I always kept as keen as a razor—and, without further ado, drove the point into the skin, making at the same moment, by a quick jerk of the hand, an incision about three inches long.

The splendid fellow never so much as winced. Beyond a deep moan, he showed no sign of having felt the slightest pain; and I shall always feel fully convinced that he knew I was doing him a service.

Matter and blood flowed copiously from the opening I had made in the skin, and in the course of two or three minutes it became evident that the poor brute had experienced very great relief.

I made another incision across the first one, and then very gently pressed the swollen part until the discharge had entirely ceased.

I then got more water, and fortunately provided with abundance of soft linen (which I used to wrap my birds in after I had shot them, to preserve their plumage unruffled) set to work to bathe and wash the foot thoroughly, after which I made a poultice of some healing leaves, and bound it securely over the puncture, the poor creature affectionately licking my hands all the while.

I then gave him a little more water to drink, and left him.

A few days later I was making my way to the patch of "open" where I had played the part of surgeon, with a leopard for my patient.

I spent a considerable amount of time in pinning and adjusting the plumage of my birds, when—I did not know why—I felt irresistibly constrained to turn my eyes towards the stump of a fallen tree. Obeying the impulse I took a good look at it, and, as I did so, became conscious of two bright, sparkling objects, glittering in the deep shadow of one of its projections.

Vaguely wondering what these could be, I remained steadfastly regarding them; and, as I did so, a very peculiar sensation stole over me. A slight and intermittent shivering seized my frame, accompanied by a momentary feeling of giddiness and nausea; all surrounding objects appeared to reel and swim out of my range of vision, leaving nothing but those two glittering points, which now appeared to expand into orbs of brilliant light.

A singing in the ears became perceptible, and, blending with the sighing of the wind through the foliage—which sounded faint and distant—quickly assumed a tone of dulcet, soothing, and delicious harmony of a distinctly rhythmical character, following the cadences of which the dazzling orbs appeared to sway gracefully before me, growing larger and more intensely brilliant every moment; and now they appeared to be surrounded with waving lines of delicate green and creamy pink, which interlaced in endless confusion of graceful flowing curves with a rapidity which made my brain reel.

More and more rapid became the movement of brilliant colour before me, more and more dazzling the shining orbs upon which I looked, until it seemed to me that I was a mere point in infinity; that heaven and earth had passed away, and that nothing remained, but those two brilliant suns, surrounded by a universe of waving green and pink lines.

Then came a sudden darkness—a shock as of electricity—a confused buzzing noise in my brain, which commenced to throb as though it would burst my skull—and a sensation of extreme giddiness which passed away as rapidly as it had come; and I found myself staring stupidly at a magnificent leopard—my former patient, as I saw at once by the remains of the bandage on his foot—who was standing growling savagely over an immense green mamba (a deadly venomous snake) who lay writhing with a broken back upon the grass, vainly trying to strike his poison fangs into the paw which, with extended talons, was dashing the reptile, more maimed and mutilated at every stroke, into the earth.

The tragedy was soon over: but I have no idea how long I might have remained seated there, staring vacantly and confusedly at my preserver, had I not at length been aroused by his approach. Then it suddenly dawned upon me that I might be his next victim; but he speedily set that fear at rest by rubbing himself against me, thrusting his head under my hand, and walking his whole length backwards and forwards, causing my hand to traverse his back until it reached his perpendicularly elevated tail and purring loudly with pleasure all the while, like an immense cat—as, of course, he was.

When the first eager manifestation of his delight had somewhat subsided, and I had soothed him into a state of tranquility, I examined his foot once more, washed it again—he followed me to the river when I walked down to its margin for water—and put a fresh dressing upon it.

Then I packed up my birds, examined the body of the snake, whose powers of fascination I had so fully, though unwillingly proved, and took my way homeward, accompanied to the extreme edge of the bush by my strange friend, who then for a minute or two followed me with his eyes, his tail waving gently to and fro the while, until he apparently realised the fact that I was actually leaving him, when he crouched low down on the ground, placed his head between his forepaws, raised a dismal howl, and finally started up and bounded back into the bush.

I never saw him again. H. Rogers.

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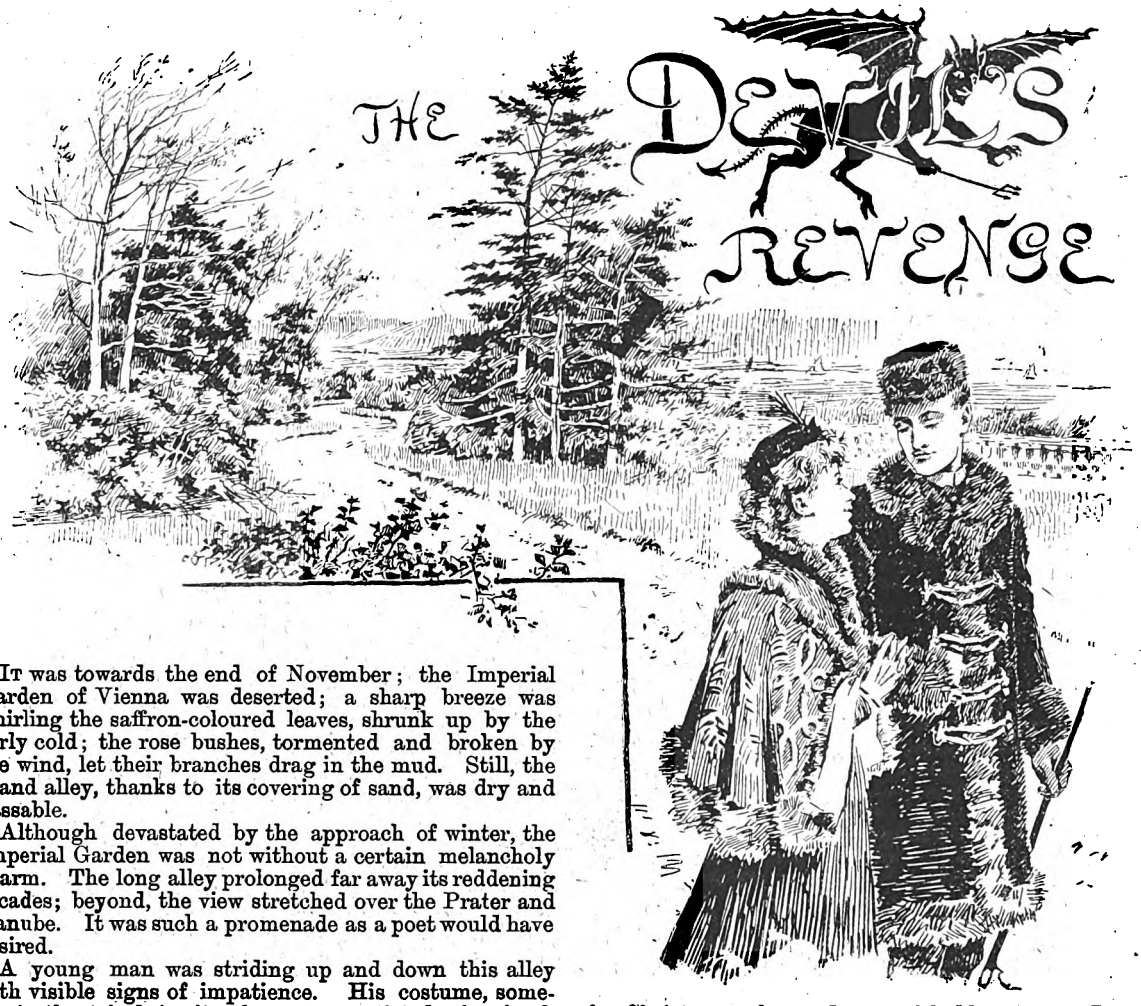
THE DEVIL'S REVENGE



It was towards the end of November; the Imperial Garden of Vienna was deserted; a sharp breeze was whirling the saffron-coloured leaves, shrunk up by the early cold; the rose bushes, tormented and broken by the wind, let their branches drag in the mud. Still, the grand alley, thanks to its covering of sand, was dry and passable.

Although devastated by the approach of winter, the Imperial Garden was not without a certain melancholy charm. The long alley prolonged far away its reddening arcades; beyond, the view stretched over the Prater and Danube. It was such a promenade as a poet would have desired.

A young man was striding up and down this alley with visible signs of impatience. His costume, somewhat theatrical in its elegance, consisted of a frock coat of black velvet, with gold facings and bordered with fur, grey woollen pantaloons, top boots, with tassels, coming half way up his legs. He might have been twenty-seven or twenty-eight years of age. His pale and regular features were full of *finesse*, and irony lurked in the creases round his eyes and the corners of his mouth.

The narrow limits within which he circumscribed his walk showed that he was waiting for someone—probably a lady, for the Imperial Garden of Vienna in the month of November is hardly propitious to business rendezvous. Soon a young girl appeared at the end of the avenue. A turban of black silk covered her rich blonde hair, whose ringlets had been slightly uncurled by the dampness of the evening; her complexion, ordinarily of waxen whiteness, had taken a rosy tint from the bite of the cold. Grouped and wrapped, she was in a mantle trimmed with marten skin; a little terrier accompanied her—a convenient chaperon, on whose indulgence and discretion you could count.

"Imagine, Heinrich," said the pretty Viennese, taking the young man's arm. "I have been dressed and ready to go out for more than an hour, and my aunt kept on with her sermons on the dangers of waltzing, on recipes for Christmas cakes and carp with blue sauce. I went out on the pretext of buying some grey boots, of which I have no need whatever. It is for you, Heinrich, that I tell all these little lies which I am constantly regretting and constantly beginning over again. What an idea it was of yours to take to the stage! What was the good of studying theology so long at Heidelberg? My parents liked you, and we might have been married to-day but for that. Instead of meeting on the sly under the bare trees of the Imperial Garden, we should be seated side by side before a fine porcelain stove in a nice, warm room, talking of the future. Would not that be a happy lot, Heinrich?"

"Yes, Katie, very happy," replied the young man, as he pressed, under the satin and fur, the dimpled arm of the pretty Viennese; "but I cannot help it. The theatre attracts me invincibly; I dream of it by day, I think of it by night; I feel the desire to live in the creation of the poets. I seem to have twenty existences. Every *rôle* that I play makes me a new life; all those passions that I express I feel. I am Hamlet, Othello, Romeo. When one is all that he can with difficulty resign himself to the humble condition of a village pastor."

"That is very noble. But you know that my parents never will have an actor for a son-in-law."

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"No, certainly not an obscure actor; a poor, ambulant artist, the puppet of managers and the public. But a great actor, covered with glory and applause, who earns more money than a minister, they will not refuse, however scrupulous they may be. When I shall come to ask your hand in a handsome coach, the varnish of which will be able to serve as a looking-glass for the astonished neighbours, and a tall lackey with gold lace will let down the steps for me, do you think they will refuse me?"

"I do not think they will. But who says, Heinrich, that you will ever come to that? You have talent, but talent is not sufficient; you must have good luck besides. By the time that you shall have become the grand actor of whom you speak, the best of your youth will have passed, and then will you be ready to marry Katie, grown old, when you have at your disposal the loves of all those princesses of the theatre, who are so joyous and so gaily decked?"

"That future," replied Heinrich, "is nearer than you think. I have an advantageous engagement at the theatre of the Corinthian Gate, and the manager is so satisfied with the manner in which I played my last *rôle* that he has made me a present of two thousand thalers."

"Yes," replied the young girl with a serious air, "that *rôle* of a demon in the new piece. I confess to you, Heinrich, that I do not like to see a Christian assume the mask of the enemy of the human race, and pronounce words of blasphemy. The other day I went to see you at the Corinthian Theatre, and at every moment I was afraid that a veritable fire would issue from one of the traps where you were swallowed up in flames of spirits of wine. I returned home all confused, and I dreamed horrible dreams."

"My good Katie, that is all imagination; to-morrow, too, will take place the last performance, and I shall no longer put on the black and red costume which so much displeases you."

While they were talking thus the two lovers had arrived at the Thaborstrasse, in the Leopoldstadt, in front of the shoemaker who was famous for the perfection of his grey boots. After chatting some time at the door, Katie entered, followed by her terrier, but not without having abandoned her pretty, slender fingers to the pressure of Heinrich's hand.

* * *

That night there was a numerous company at the Two-headed Eagle, the guests were of the most mixed description. The Two-headed Eagle was one of those blessed cellars celebrated by Hoffman, with steps so worn, so greasy, so slippery, that you cannot put your foot upon the first one without at once finding yourself at the bottom, with your elbows on the table, a pipe in your mouth, between a pot of beer and a measure of new wine.

Everybody was eating and drinking; the drink consisted of strong beer and a mixture of new red wine with old white wine; the food, of slices of cold veal, ham, or pastry.

Round the tables couples turned unceasingly one of those long German waltzes, which produce upon northern imaginations the same effect as hashish and opium on the Orientals; the couples passed and repassed rapidly; the women, almost fainting with pleasure on the arms of their cavaliers to the sounds of a waltz, swept away with their skirts the clouds of smoke and refreshed the faces of the drinkers.

Heinrich went to the end of the cellar, and sat on a table where were already seated three or four personages of joyous mien and merry humour.

"Ah, Heinrich!" cried the eldest of the band. "You know you had a truly diabolical look the other night; you almost frightened me. Who would think that Heinrich, who drinks beer as we do, and who does not draw back before a slice of cold ham, could put on such venomous, wicked, and sardonic airs, and that with a single gesture he can make a whole theatre shudder?"

"Eh! why that is the reason Heinrich is a great artist, a sublime comedian. There is no glory in playing a *rôle* that is in your character; the triumph, for a coquette, is to excel in playing *ingénues*. Don't you agree with me?"

Heinrich sat down modestly, called for a large glass

Pushed him by main force through the floor.

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of mixed wine, and the conversation continued on the same subject. On all sides it was admiration and compliments.

"Ah, if the great Wolfgang Goethe had seen you!" said one.

"Show us your feet," said another. "I am sure you have a forked hoof."

The other drinkers, attracted by these exclamations, looked at Heinrich seriously, all happy to have the opportunity of examining closely so remarkable a man. The young man who had formerly known Heinrich at the university, and whose names he hardly knew, came up to him and shook him cordially by the hand, as if they had been his intimate friends.

One man only, seated at a neighbouring table, seemed to take no part in the general enthusiasm. His head thrown backward, he was thrumming distractedly with his fingers on the crown of his hat a military march, and from time to time he uttered a sort of humph, singularly dubious.

The aspect of this man was of the strangest, although he was dressed like an honest burgher of Vienna, enjoying a modest fortune; his grey eyes were shaded with green tints, and shot out phosphoric lights like the eyes of a cat. When his pale, flat lips parted, they showed two rows of teeth very white, very sharp, and very wide apart, of the most cannibal and ferocious aspect; his long nails, shining and curved, took a vague appearance of claws; but that physiognomy appeared only by rapid flashes; to the eye that watched him fixedly, his face resumed the *bourgeois* and *débonnaire* appearance of a retired Viennese merchant, and you felt astonished that you could have suspected of villainy a face so vulgar and trivial.

Internally Heinrich was shocked at the indifference of the man. That disdainful silence took away their value from the panegyrics which his noisy companions lavished upon him. It was the silence of an old and experienced connoisseur, who does not allow himself to be deceived by appearances.

Atmayer, the youngest of the company, the warmest admirer of Heinrich, could not endure this coldness, and addressing the strange man, as if taking him to bear witness to an assertion that he advanced, he said:

"Is it not so, sir, no actor has ever played the *rôle* of Mephistopheles better than my comrade here!"

"Humph!" said the stranger, flashing his green eye and cracking his sharp teeth. "Mr. Heinrich is a young man of talent, whom I esteem very highly; but he is wanting in many things necessary to play the *rôle* of the devil."

And suddenly drawing himself up: "Have you ever seen the devil, Mr. Heinrich?"

He put this question in such a strange and mocking tone that all the company felt a shudder run down their backs.

"That, however, would be necessary for the truthfulness of your play. The other evening I was at the theatre of the Corinthian Gate, and I was not satisfied with your laugh; it was, at the utmost, a sly laugh. My dear Mr. Heinrich, this is the way you ought to laugh."

And thereupon, as if to give him the example, he burst into a laugh, so sharp, so strident, so sardonic, that the orchestra and the dancers stopped at that very instant, and the glass in the windows trembled. The stranger continued this pitiless and convulsive laughter for several minutes, and Heinrich and his companions, in spite of their terror, could not help imitating it.

When Heinrich had recovered himself, the vaults of the tavern were repeating, like a feeble echo, the last notes of that broken and terrible laugh, and the stranger was no longer there.

* * * *

Some days after this strange incident, which he had almost forgotten, or which he remembered only as a joke of an ironical burgher, Heinrich was playing his part of the demon in the new piece. On the first row of seats in the orchestra was seated the stranger of the tavern, and at every word pronounced he shook his head, winked

Then he entered upon the scene . . . like a perfect actor.

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his eyes, smacked his tongue against his palate, and showed signs of the liveliest impatience.

"Bad, bad!" he murmured to himself.

His neighbours, astonished and shocked at his manners, applauded, and thought to themselves that the old gentleman was very hard to please.

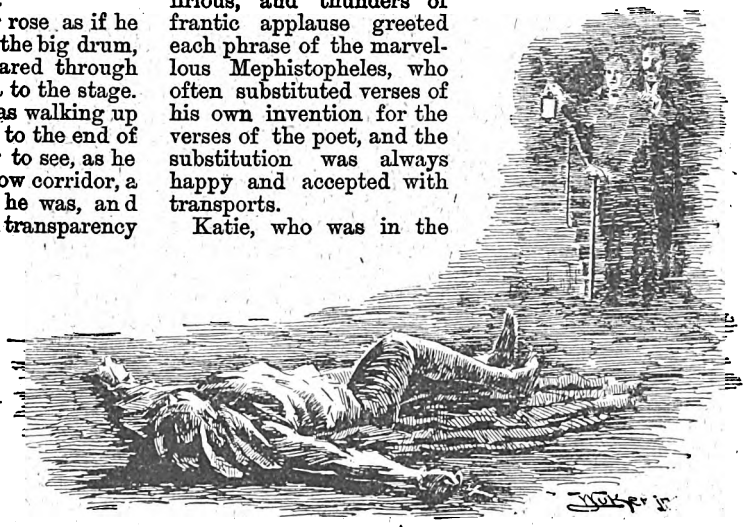
At the end of the first act the stranger rose as if he had taken a sudden resolution, strode over the big drum, the cymbals, and trombone, and disappeared through the little door that leads from the orchestra to the stage. Heinrich, waiting until the curtain rose, was walking up and down in the wings, and when he came to the end of his short promenade, what was his terror to see, as he turned, standing in the middle of the narrow corridor, a mysterious personage clothed exactly as he was, and who looked at him with eyes whose greenish transparency had a strange profoundity in the darkness; the white, wide-set teeth gave something ferocious to the sardonic smile.

Heinrich could not fail to recognise the stranger whom he had seen at the Two-headed Eagle, or rather the devil in person, for it was he.

"Ah, ah, my young friend! You wish to play the devil? You were very middling in the first act, and you would decidedly give a very poor idea of me to the good citizens of Vienna. You will allow me to replace you this evening; and, as you might interfere with me, I will send you to the cellar below the stage."

Heinrich recognised the Prince of Darkness, and felt himself lost. Putting his hand mechanically to the little cross that Katie had given him, he tried to call for help, and to murmur his formula of exorcism; but terror choked him; he could only utter a feeble rattle. The devil seized Heinrich with his hooked hand by the shoulders, and pushed him by main force through the floor. Then he entered upon the scene, when his cue came, like a perfect actor.

His incisive, biting, venomous and truly diabolic acting at first surprised the spectators. What especially produced a great effect was that sharp titter like the grating of a saw—that laugh of the lost blaspheming the joys of paradise. Never had an actor attained such power of sarcasm, such a depth of villainy; the audience laughed, but they trembled. All the audience was panting with emotion, phosphoric sparks glinted from the fingers of the terrible actor, trains of sparkling flame ran from his feet, the footlights shot out reddish and greenish flashes, a sort of sulphurous smell reigned in the theatre, the spectators were, as it were, delirious, and thunders of frantic applause greeted each phrase of the marvellous Mephistopheles, who often substituted verses of his own invention for the verses of the poet, and the substitution was always happy and accepted with transports.



Heinrich Falkenstein was dead.

Katie, who was in the theatre, was in a state of extraordinary alarm; she did not recognise her dear Heinrich, she presaged some misfortune with that spirit of divination which love gives.

The performance ended amidst indescribable enthusiasm. When the curtain fell the public called for Mephistopheles with loud cries. He was sought for in vain, but at last a scene-shifter came and told the manager that Heinrich had been found in the cellar, where he had probably fallen through a trap.

The hapless actor was taken up. His clothing was burned in places, and on his shoulders were deep scratches. They spoke to him, but he did not answer.

Heinrich Falkenstein was dead.

LE VIER.

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Diamond ✣ Cut ✣ Diamond.

My house at Kensington had twice been robbed to a small extent.

The first time the burglars only got a few silver-plated spoons, that had been used by the servants. The second time the linen and half a cold turkey were taken from the kitchen. On hearing of this depredation I made the following mental note: "The next time my house is burgled I am going to try a little experiment—whether I can catch the burglar."

One night, in the dead of winter, I walked home from the theatre. I was a bachelor, and had no servants sleeping in the house, but my mind was cheered as I approached the dwelling by the thought that its time of lonesomeness and my bachelor days were soon to be brought to an end and by the best girl in the world.

I sat down before the fire which my caretaker had built up before leaving, removed my shoes, put on my slippers, and picked up a novel. After half-an-hour's reading I became aware that I was quite hungry, so I laid my book aside and marched downstairs. I remembered that I was singing an air from a once popular opera:

> When the energetic burglar's not a-burgling,
> When the cut-throat isn't occupied in crime,
> He loves to hear the little brook a-gurgling,
> And to listen to the merry village chime.

II.

It was not because I had any thought of housebreakers that I sang that song, but it had always given me a sense of restfulness from the turmoils of life. I had, on finishing the verse, reached the end of the hall, and opened the dining-room door very abruptly, when I started to find myself in the glare of a bull's-eye lantern held by an invisible hand, and to hear a gruff voice say:

"Show us yer hands!"

Just at my left on the wall was a little metallic knob which I had only to press to flood the room with light from incandescent burners. Now I am of a peculiarly perverse temperament. From childhood I have felt an irresistible inclination to do the very opposite from what I have been told, regardless of consequences, and I therefore claim no credit for nerve for disobeying the command to show my hands, though I knew I was confronted by a desperate man, who probably had a revolver in his hand. I deliberately pressed the little knob. Instantly the bull's-eye grew red and sullen in the bright electric glow.

Across the table, standing by the sideboard, was the most repulsive looking ruffian I ever saw. His thick, bushy hair almost covered his receding forehead, and a few locks fell over his small black eyes. His neck was very thick and his complexion very bad. But the most alarming feature was his mouth. In all my twenty-nine years I had never seen such a cavern in a human face. It seemed to yawn like an abyss when he opened it.

"Hold up your hands, young feller," he repeated, "an' no monkeyin'."

"Heavens! what a mouth!" I exclaimed.

This irrelevant remark seemed to surprise him, for he only stared in silence for a moment.

"Come now," he again said, "no foolin'. Put up yer dukes over your head, or I'll bore ye through."

"Pardon me for refusing your request," I replied, "but my position would be a very uncomfortable one. Besides, I think your tone is impertinent."

This maddened the fellow. He placed his lantern on the sideboard and came round the table.

"See here, young feller," he said, grasping me by the wrist and staring into my face, while he clutched the revolver in the other hand, "I told ye I didn't want no monkeyin'."

"If I had a mouth like yours," I replied, "and if I could supply it with plenty of bread and bacon I would live 200 years—certain."

The burglar replied to this with a profane remark, and at once examined all my pockets to see that I had no revolver. "Thunder!" he said on finding that I had not. "You hain't got no arms. I could eat a dozen like you."

"I've no doubt of it," I replied.

He took my watch and purse from me and put them in his own pocket.

"You'll find that a good watch," I said, "and the cash in that book is legal tender anywhere."

"Be careful you don't make no noise," he said. "Us poor fellows has got to make our livin' off blokes like you, an' we don' get nabbed any more'n we kin help, you betcher life, not even if we has to plug somebody; so keep mum an' don't say a word."

III.

"Now see here," said I in a very business-like manner, "let us understand each other. You are robbing my house. That's all right. I'm used to it. Only I determined that the next time one of your calling invaded my premises I would try a little experiment."

"Huh?" he asked.

"I determined," I repeated, "to try a little experiment."

"Swag is what I want, not experiments," replied my guest.

"That is all right," I replied, "you may have the swag. I will have the experiment. In fact, it is a part of my experiment that you shall have the swag."

"Good enough," said he. "An' what's the rest of it?"

"I will explain that to you later," I replied. "I see you have been investigating the sideboard. Well, there is plenty of solid silver there. It won't be quite so valuable melted down, but then I won't be able to recognise it at your uncle's or elsewhere. Get to work now. Put it all out on the table, wrap it in napkins, and the whole in a tablecloth."

Mr. Burglar looked on me with the most marked surprise. He evidently concluded that I was a lunatic.

I drew a big chair up to the grate, stirred up the dying

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fire, put on more coal, and with my feet on the fender prepared to enjoy my ease. Mr. Burglar spent more time watching me than in ransacking the sideboard. He seemed to think that I would suddenly seize a pistol from some hiding place and pepper him. But I didn't. I only sat still and talked to him in a facetious manner about various matters, particularly politics and burglary.

We passed many pleasantries, and he was now coming to think me a very interesting lunatic.

"I reckon I've got it all," he said at length, lifting the heavy burden; "an' I must say you're the queerest cove I ever seen."

IV.

"Well," I said, "I know of nothing else in the house that I should be willing for you to take away, and I will proceed to do what I came down here for—that is, to take supper. If I had not been hungry I should not have the pleasure of making your acquaintance. Do you like cold turkey? Come along with me."

I went into the kitchen, turned on the incandescent lights and entered the pantry, Mr. Burglar watching me closely and nervously, ready to shoot me if I picked up a weapon in any unexpected place. I took no notice of his actions, and, perfectly unconcerned, I found some cold turkey, some celery, a few slices of bread, and some butter. I put them all on a tray and went back to the dining-room table with them, Mr. Burglar following as vigilant as ever.

"Help yourself," I said, giving him a plate, knife and fork. "Have some turkey. That celery is very fine. And this bread is unsurpassed. Now make yourself at home." We did not sit down but stood together by the table.

My guest was somewhat embarrassed to know how to eat his turkey and at the same time hold his revolver. He compromised by transferring the latter to his left hand and taking up a slice of fowl with his right, "I don't belong to the haristocracy," he said, "an' I reckon I'll eat with my fingers."

We ate in silence for a few moments, when I said in a tone of chiding for my forgetfulness: "Well I have forgotten the wine. You'll say it is the best you ever drunk."

"You hain't got no gin, I reckon?" said the burglar, with his mouth full of turkey.

"No," I replied, reaching a large decanter full of ruby liquid down from the sideboard; "I don't keep it, but try this."

I placed the decanter by him and set out two ordinary tumblers. He looked at me very straight for a moment, then poured the glass nearly full and raised it to his cavern mouth. It pleased him. He almost closed his eyes in his contentment.

My time had come. With a movement like lightning I gave him a stunning blow just under the ear with a fist that had felled more than one man in the gymnasium. His head struck the fender as he fell and I was on him in a second. I wrenched the revolver from his hand, arose, laid it on the table, and calmly finished my luncheon. When the burglar sat up and rubbed his head in a dazed way, I had resumed my seat by the fire. But the tables were turned—I had the revolver.

"Now," I said, "I am going to show you the other part of that experiment. First, you untie that tablecloth and put the silver and napkins back in the sideboard as you found them." He eyed me sullenly and obeyed.

V.

When he had finished I said: "Lest your curiosity as to the nature of my experiment be devouring you I will tell you at once that it is this: Instead of letting you go away with my valuables, I am going to take all yours. Do you see? I am going to burgle the burglar. Take off your coat and throw it to me." The burglar obeyed. His face was black as a thundercloud.

"Now your vest," I commanded.

He hesitated.

"Be quick," I said, tapping the revolver, and he sullenly complied.

"Now your trousers," I continued.

He looked at me with an expression almost piteous. I raised the revolver to the level of his head and said: "Off with them," and off they came.

Mr. Burglar now stood before me in rather meagre undergarments, the very picture of helpless rage. He gritted his teeth and clenched his hands in the most savage manner, and the expression of his cave-like mouth was something terrible.

"Don't be unduly agitated," I said in soft tones. "This is all of my experiment. I will now let you go out by the kitchen door, and remember that I am satisfied with having robbed you of your clothing and whatever may be in your pockets. I will not appear against you in court under any circumstances. You are free."

I found the kitchen door unlocked when we reached it. He had come in that way. I sent the despoiled burglar out into the wintry air shivering, locked the house more securely, took his clothes, and went away to my room.

VI.

In addition to my watch and money, I found in the burglar's pockets some gold and notes. "Surely my experiment has been a success," I said aloud. "How Ida will laugh when I tell her my adventure. Bless her heart!" And, thinking of the dear girl, I took from a drawer in my dressing-room a beautiful plush case. It contained a set of diamonds I had bought for Ida for a wedding present. They had cost me £400, and I looked at them every night as they glistened beautifully. I opened the case and held it under the light.

Never in all my life had I such feelings as I had that moment. The case was empty—the stones were gone.

I understood it all. The burglar had been wandering over the house before I came home. He had been to my room. Had even lit the gas. Yes, he had taken Ida's diamonds. I searched the clothes again. They did not contain the missing jewels. Could he have carried them off in his hands or in his socks? I rushed downstairs, out of the kitchen door, and searched the adjacent yards, streets, and alleys in vain. I met a policeman. No, he had seen nothing of a man with a big mouth, walking abroad in his underclothes.

I returned home at daybreak, baffled, sick at heart. Under the door I found a note written by an untrained hand. It read thus:

Dear sir i take my pen to Let you no i didnt kech cold I had already throw a suit of yore close out of the kitchen dore they was a little small but bettern mine i reckon you found yore Dimons missin i put them in my heavens what a mouth when you made me take of my dudds i aint afeard youl ketch me. You said you woudn prosecut me under no circumstanses and i reckon a gent like you will keep yore word, you aint so smart tho as you can think you are.

And that is what I have been thinking ever since.

Agnes Jewly.

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A MUTE REPLY.

Reginald (very much in love, and having manœuvred for this opportunity): "We need not walk so fast, Miss Ethel, there will be plenty of time to reach the station, and the road is so delightful, don't you think?"

Ethel (brightly): "Oh, delightful, really!"

Reginald (anxiously): "Perhaps you would have preferred to ride with the others?"

Ethel: "No, indeed. I am fonder of walking than riding, aren't you?"

Reginald (enthusiastically): "Oh, yes, especially with—with a person who enjoys it. If I could only stay longer, we might plan some glorious walks about here—that is, if you would care to share them with me."

Ethel (sweetly): "It would delight me—and I am sure auntie would love to go with us! She is a famous pedestrian."

Reginald: "Yes (with a sigh). It does seem hard that I am compelled to leave just now, but father being ill makes it imperative. I simply *must* go. And these last few weeks have been to me a glimpse of Paradise!"

Ethel (smiling dreamily): "You feel like a banished Adam, I suppose?"

Reginald (softly): "A good deal worse. Eve went with *him*, you know."

Ethel: "Yes, poor Eve! Imagine how he must have scolded her along the way."

Reginald: "Oh, *I* imagine they walked out quite hopefully, hand in hand, to seek their fortune."

Ethel: "Poor girl. It is bad enough to seek one's fortune *now*. But in those days there could not possibly have been any fortunes to be found."

Reginald: "Oh, they got along. So do lots of couples that—that love each other (glancing down at her tenderly). I know *I* would not be afraid to take long odds against Fate, if I could have the woman of my heart beside me always."

Ethel: "Perhaps not, but *she* might be afraid."

Reginald (rather disconcerted): "Well, I don't know. She would not be—er—ah—if she returned my affection. (Bravely) Shall you be coming up to town soon, do you think?"

Ethel: "To town? Oh, no."

(A long silence. Reginald switches viciously with his stick at the inoffensive wayside growths, and stares gloomily along the road.)

Ethel: "Of course I won't forget—but how many things we learn that we never have any use for! The mind has room for all sorts of odds and ends—Oh, there they are, on the platform—and they're waving. Oh, your train is in—look there——"

Reginald: "Yes, I see. (Desperately) Ethel, I love you so—I adore you—I could die for you this minute."

Ethel: "Oh, how can you say such things? And they're frantic for you to hurry. *Please* run."

Reginald: "You believe it, don't you, don't you *dear!*"

Ethel: "Oh, you'll miss your train! They'll blame me for it. *Do* hurry!"

Reginald: "But you must tell me—if I may hope? I beg of you, Ethel. Say you care——"

Ethel: "Oh, good-bye, and run for pity's sake. Run, run!"

Reginald (wildly): "Answer quick. Yes—or no?"

Ethel (also wildly): "No! No—I mean, I can't answer—there isn't time!"

Reginald (straightening himself up with sudden manliness): "Very well, Ethel. I understand. Yes, it is a little word. There would be time to say it—if you *cared!* Good-bye—God bless you!" (Rushes from her and enters the train. Ethel hurries forward, as near as possible to the line of windows. As the train moves off their eyes meet. Ethel spells plainly in deaf and dumb show an emphatic "YES!" Reginald kisses his hand in a wordless rapture of recognition and gratitude as the train recedes.)

Ethel (pensively retracing her steps along the quiet country road): "And to think of the important uses we can make of useless knowledge. If Reginald had not taught me that silly alphabet, what could *I have* done? I'd rather die than say 'Yes' in a hurry, even to the dearest fellow in the world; but somehow I didn't mind *spelling* it—a bit."

Madeline Bridges.

A TEN-POUND PRIZE.

(See Next Page.)

On the next page is a puzzle picture composed of 88 squares. If these squares be rearranged in a certain order they will form a real picture.

We offer a prize of £10 to the first person who sends the correct solution. In order to give readers in all parts of the United Kingdom as equal a chance as possible, none of the solutions received will be opened until Thursday, April 16th, when all those received will be considered together. In the event of two or more correct solutions being included in one day's post, the prize will be given to the sender of the *neatest* one. Consolation Prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

If no correct solution be received on or before Tuesday, April 21st, 1896, the Ten-Pound Prize will be given to the sender of the solution then to hand which is most nearly correct.

Pictures should be packed flat or folded, not rolled, and the outside wrapper must be marked "May."

N.B.—To make the puzzle more difficult some of the squares have been turned upside down.

Key to the last Picture Puzzle and names of winners will be found on page 320.

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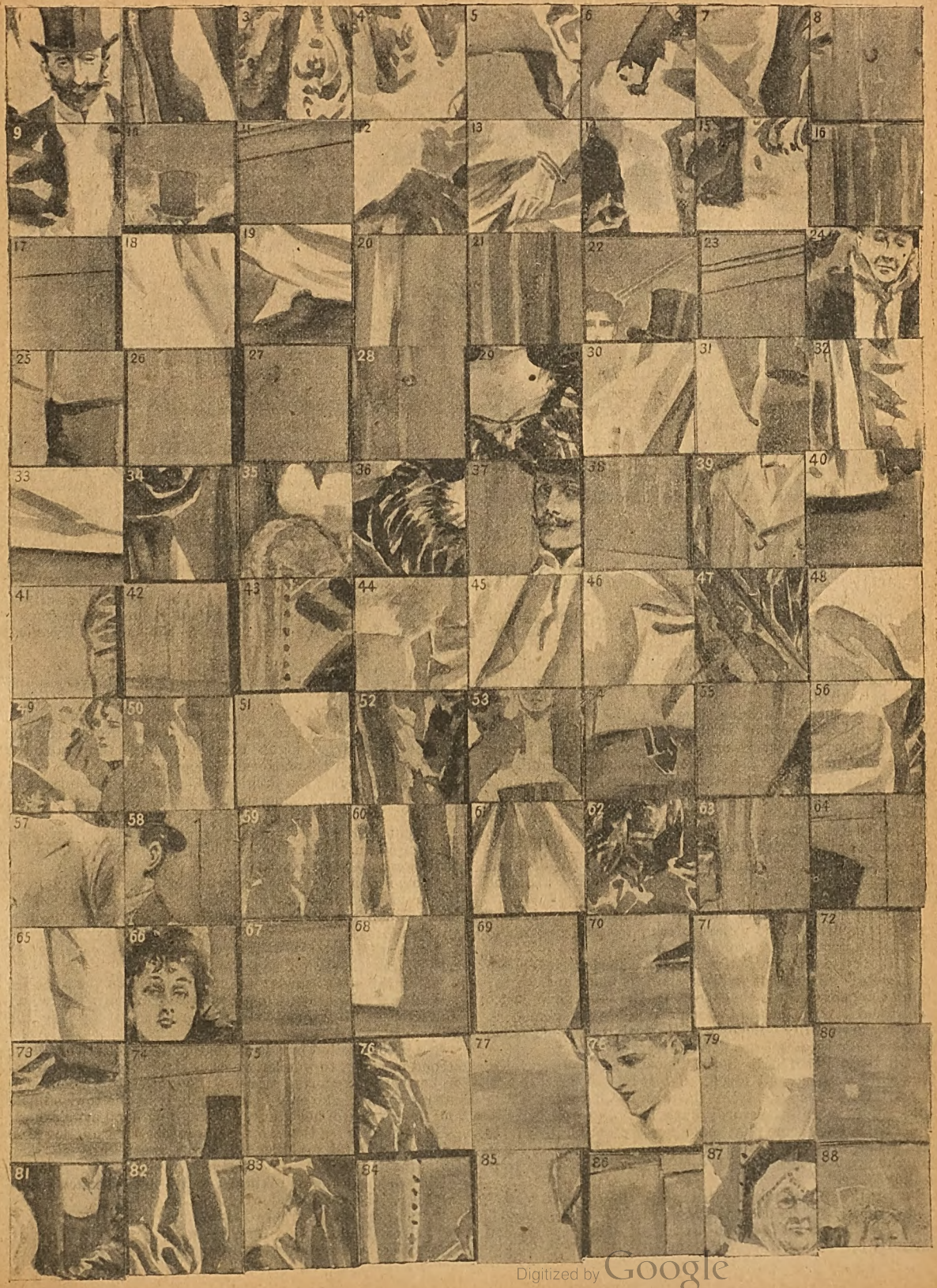

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By WINIFRED GRAHAM. *Author of "Through the Valley," "Six First-Class Passengers," etc.*

CHAPTER XIX.

LET US BE OPEN AS THE DAY.

ELEANOR notices after that night Carol becomes nervous and irritable.

His absences are more frequent, but wherever he goes he takes the dog with him for protection.

Though only a rough-haired terrier, it seems to guard him; yet the constant recurrence of apparently reasonless growls and barks startles and annoys him.

Eleanor often sits with Elizabeth Kachin when Quinton is out, and wonders what she would do without the companionship of this one white woman.

That day she is walking up the hill towards her friend's hut, when she meets young Tombo, who rushes up and seizes her skirts.

"Oh, do come!" he cries, dragging her along; "something awful bad is going on at home. There is a stranger at our door crying just dreadful; and mother's red in the face, sayin' no end of angry words, stampin', fumin', and wringing her hands. The stranger wanted to see me and speak; but mother just hustled me out at the back, and tells me to go and play beans in the jungle. But the boys are not there. Quartey M'Ba is takin' care of his father, who's dead drunk with Zoo, and little Rangusaw Mymoodelayer is workin' with his uncle. It's sure to be all right if *you* come, Mrs. Quinton. Mother 'll calm down when she sees who I've brought."

He runs eagerly before her, while Eleanor, utterly at a loss to comprehend the nature of the trouble, approaches Elizabeth's homestead in some trepidation.

"I'll have none of you," Mrs. Kachin's hard voice is heard exclaiming. "Did I not write it plain in black and white? Didn't I repeat it three times over on the same page, twice underlined? Am I not old enough to judge for myself, to know my own will? Begone, or I'll tell you some home truths which were best not uttered from my lips."

"Oh, little Beth, little Beth!" moans a pleading voice, "the child I nursed and loved. Can it be you that speaks so hard, that turns me from the door? Let me see the child before I go—the sturdy dark boy who was born to you. Beth, have some pity, some mercy on my misery! It has cost me nearly my little all to come out to you, for I thought your heart would soften when you saw your mother's face."

She breaks off into bitter sobbing and sinks on the step.

Eleanor stands like one paralysed listening to the quarrel, while Tombo hides behind her skirts, clinging to her fearfully.

Her face flushes with shame for Elizabeth, and pity for this stricken woman. Her eyes flash scorn on Mrs. Kachin, as she turns and raises the stranger from her attitude of humility and degradation.

"Your daughter's virtue and pride are things to be despised, accursed," she says, "when bound in such an armour of harshness and cruelty."

The weeping woman lifts her head, and her eyes meet Eleanor's.

The two start involuntarily. The scene of a railway carriage rushes suddenly before their vision, the fragments of a torn photograph, the name on the label of Eleanor's dressing-bag.

"Mrs. Roche!" gasps the stranger.

That word here! It stuns, petrifies her. The very sound of it is as a blow.

A flock of four or five horn-bills fly above their heads, making their noises like an express train through the air. As they fade from sight Eleanor fancies the train has stopped at the little platform of Copthorne.

The shrill cry of the jungle fowl, crowing like bantams on the old farmland at home, seem to repeat the word, "*Roche, Roche!*"

"What can I do?" asks the woman wildly, grasping Eleanor's arm. "I am here, and Beth has cast me out, I have nowhere to lay my head."

"Come with me," says Eleanor slowly, deliberately, looking from the faded features of the withered woman to Mrs. Kachin's contracted mouth. "I will give you rest and shelter."

"You will regret it if you take her under your roof!" cries Elizabeth, slamming the door.

"May the good Samaritans of this world do the same for you, Mrs. Roche, when you are in trouble," says the weary wanderer, as Eleanor leads her faltering footsteps down the hill.

She is too excited by the strange coincidence of this, their second meeting, to wonder whether she is binding a burden on her back, or offering a refuge thoughtlessly without consulting Carol. She only looks pityingly at the towzled hair and drawn face of her guest, pressing her hand sympathetically as they enter the verandah together. "I am not Mrs. Roche here," falters Eleanor, "you must call me Mrs. Quinton."

The woman looks searchingly, sadly, into Eleanor's eyes.

"I see," she answers slowly.

"And your name?" asks Eleanor.

"Palfrey Blum. I am Mrs. Blum."

What an odd introduction, what a puzzling fate.

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Carol is deeply annoyed at his return to discover the guest.

"What on earth you want to bring that hideous creature with a head of hay here for I can't imagine," he exclaims. "You must shunt her as soon as possible, Eleanor, I can't have you picking up waifs and strays, and turning our home into a sort of infirmary."

"I don't know what to do, it is a most pitiable story."

"Oh! dash the story!" interpolates Carol. "I shouldn't mind if she were not so confoundedly ugly."

"I could not help it, darling," says Eleanor tearfully. "I did not think you would object."

"Well, now she is here, what are you going to do with her?"

"I don't know."

Carol stalks up and down the room with his hands in his pockets.

Eleanor's spirits sink.

"I will see what I can do, dearest," she says at last.

Carol turns, seeing her beautiful eyes moist and sorrowful.

He gathers her into his arms and kisses her suddenly.

"Get rid of the old ghost," he whispers. "I can't endure to see a relic of faded beauty standing decayed before my eyes. A woman has no right to grow old, it is an unpardonable offence, and takes away one's appetite having to look at her at meals."

"How unchristian you are, Carol!" she says, smiling under his caress.

The following morning Mrs. Blum seems refreshed, and looks less careworn after her night's sleep.

"There is one thing I desire more than all else on earth," she confides to Eleanor, "and that is to hold my grandson in my arms, to kiss him once."

"I have been again to Elizabeth, but she will not listen to me. Perhaps I might get the boy to you without her knowledge, or big Tombo may possibly bring him. There were tears in his eyes to-day when I was pleading with Elizabeth."

"Ah! Big Tombo is not so bitter against me as his wife. He is a good man, and charitable."

So Eleanor watches for Mr. Kachin to pass down the path to the valley below, where the rice is cultivated.

When she sees him she runs out. He stops and bows. Eleanor gives him her hand.

"Ah, Mrs. Quinton," he says, "we are deeply indebted to you for your kindness to poor Mrs. Blum. Even my wife in her righteous indignation owns that. I should personally be very glad to do anything I could for her, only Elizabeth is so determined. Can you advise me?"

Eleanor thinks a moment.

"She must be sent back again, I suppose. She regrets bitterly having come."

"Has she any money?"

"Oh, yes, but hardly enough to take her home; she relied on living with you and Elizabeth. I shall help her all I can, and perhaps you will also."

Big Tombo works hard, and he has a good store of hoardings laid by. He is an intensely generous man, and but for his wife's watchfulness would give away all that he has to others.

Eleanor inspires him to make an offer.

"I will pay her fare to England," he says. "It will save Elizabeth the pain of coming in contact with her. After all, she is my mother-in-law. It is the least that I can do."

"You are most good and kind," replies Eleanor, "and she would be deeply grateful if you came in now and told her this yourself. She feels her daughter's slight acutely."

Big Tombo bows assent.

The beautiful Mrs. Quinton's word is law.

Mrs. Blum trembles with emotion as her eyes fall upon him. She listens to what he says with tears in her eyes and a blessing in her heart.

"You are a good son," she says, taking his great brown hands between her withered palms, and pressing them to her lips. "I love you for your care of Elizabeth—for the happy home in which she lives. When she speaks of me harshly tell her to think of me as one dead. We reverence the names of those who are underground, even though we despise them during their lives. I shall never forget what you have done for me."

Her voice is choked with emotion.

"If—if you don't mind," she falters, "I should like to look once on your child before I go."

Tombo bends his head. He has not the heart to refuse her.

That afternoon he sends the boy, without Elizabeth's knowledge, to carry some bananas to Eleanor.

"Come in, my dear," she says kindly, as the little boy presents the fruit. "There is a lady who wishes to see you."

She takes his small hand and leads him into the room.

Mrs. Blum rushes forward with a cry, and flinging her arms round the child's neck, kisses him again and again.

Then perching him on her knee, she looks at him intently, murmuring: "Beth's boy! Beth's son!"

"You are the lady who got scolded," says Tombo gravely. "Why was my mother so angry with you?"

"It is not polite to ask questions," puts in Eleanor hastily.

"But she ought not to be cross," continues Tombo, "because you must be good, you're white, like Mrs. Quinton, and mother never rows her. Who are you?" placing his tiny fingers against her cheek, and stroking it gently.

"I am your granny, dear, and you will never see me again. But you must think of me sometimes, and remember that I loved you."

She strains him to her heart passionately.

"You're crying!" says Tombo. "That's naughty. Oh! don't cry," shaking her in a sudden frenzy of fear. "Granny, Granny!"

Children always dread to see their elders give way to any emotion, and the little fellow's terror brings back Mrs. Blum's composure.

"There, darling, see, I am smiling," she says, her faded eyes lighting up through a mist of tears.

"I think it is very nice to have a Granny, and I want to keep her always."

"That is impossible, dearest. You must be a good boy, and not ask mother questions."

Eleanor brings him sweets and cakes, which he readily devours, sharing them with the dog, who jumps up, startling Mrs. Blum, on whose knees young Tombo is seated.

"You must trot home soon," says Eleanor, glancing nervously at the time, and fearing every moment lest Elizabeth should sweep in like a tragedy queen, and snatch her offspring from Mrs. Blum's arms.

"Yes, soon," sighs his grandmother, holding him as if she will never let him go. She detaches a small gold locket from her chain, in which is a lock of Elizabeth's hair.

"You may keep this, darling," she murmurs, "to remember Granny by."

She looks tenderly at the pale, flaxen lock of hair, which grew on little Beth's baby forehead.

"Don't lose it, Tombo, for it is very precious—one of Granny's dearest treasures. Mother will recognise it and know the hair inside. Tell her you must keep it always, because she played with it as a little girl."

The boy gazes in awe at the locket.

"Didn't it cost a lot of money?" he asks.

Mrs. Blum smiles at the remark.

"You are an odd child," she says, placing him on the ground.

"Have you nothing you can give Granny?" whispers Eleanor in his ear.

Tombo draws a small whistle from his pocket and carries it with an air of triumph to Mrs. Blum.

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"This is for you, Granny. It is all my own, so don't be afraid. Quartey M'Ba gave it to me for a dead 'minah' I found in the jungle."

She takes the little whistle tremblingly.

"Granny will wear it on her chain," she says, "in the place of her locket; she will keep it quite as carefully."

Then she kisses the child, and pushes him from her, covering her face with her hands that she may not see him go.

Eleanor leads Tombo away, and watches him run down the hill—he is clasping the gold locket safely in both hands.

* * * * * *

Mrs. Blum has departed blessing Eleanor, and pouring such overwhelming gratitude into her ears that solitude is a welcome relief.

"Poor soul," she thinks. "Shall I ever come to *that?*"

A step is heard on the verandah, the rustle of a dress, and Elizabeth Kachin stands before her.

She is paler than of yore, her eyes a trifle softer. The hard lips part in greeting; she takes Eleanor by both hands.

"You are a good woman," she says, with an admiring glance. "I cannot tell you how high your great charity has placed you in my esteem and regard. To think you actually laid aside all your natural feelings of repulsion and harboured such a woman out of charity."

"Merely an act of plain humanity," replies Eleanor.

"Nevertheless, I could not do it, even to my own mother. To be in contact with what is sinful is abhorrent to me. Still, I am not blind to your great kindness and self-sacrifice. Tombo and I both wish to thank you."

Eleanor's heart swells at the words—to be thought good, noble, charitable. What a blessed thing it is! She realises how deeply she still values public opinion, which she has cast to the winds in her reckless love for Carol. Elizabeth, by her words of praise, endears herself to Eleanor, in spite of her late behaviour to the poor outcast. It is well to be looked up to and to be believed in. Then the galling thought creeps into her elated brain:

"You have no right to this approbation. Elizabeth is a just woman, clothed in that pitiless virtue which tramples down the weak. You are deceiving her and accepting what is not your due. You may be foolish, wild, mistaken, Eleanor; you may have ruined your husband and yourself; but you are *not* a hypocrite."

She realises in a moment all it will cost her to lose her friend's respect, to see the look of scorn in Elizabeth's eye, and watch her turn away as from one polluted.

For the moment it seems too hard, but Eleanor pulls herself together and sets her teeth.

She walks across to the door with a steady step, her slim young figure drawn up to its full height, her head tossed back, her cheeks aflame.

Elizabeth watches in mute surprise. Then Eleanor breaks the silence, flings open the door, and cries with outstretched hand pointing to the hill:

"*Go!* I, too, am a wicked woman!"

CHAPTER XX.

The ideal! Dim vanities of dreams by night.

From the moment those fatal words were uttered: "Go! I, too, am a wicked woman!" the scales fall from Elizabeth's eyes.

How natural it seems to her now, the so-called Mrs. Quinton's act of sympathy.

But what she does not know, nor can ever guess, is the supreme effort that confession costs Eleanor. It is wrung from her lips through sheer force of will, and as Mrs. Kachin obeys the command, and with head held proudly aloft, passes out into the blinding sunlight, Eleanor receives her first slight since leaving England.

The cup is bitter, it takes away her breath. She stands in the doorway gasping, blinded by the glaring light of day. A victim at the shrine of truth, self condemned, self accused.

It is thus that Carol finds her, gazing tragically at the departing figure of Elizabeth Kachin.

"What's up?" he asks, seeing her distress.

"I have told Elizabeth," she says slowly, "what I am."

Quinton bites his lip with annoyance.

"I should not have thought even you could have committed such an egregious act of folly!"

"I could not help myself. Elizabeth thought me so good, so different, and her words seared my conscience. Ah! you smile, no wonder. It ought to be dead by rights, long ago."

"You poor little thing," he says more tenderly. "But it was very silly, and another time do not let a few miserable scruples overrule your better judgment. After all, Elizabeth is no great loss, but it is always unwise and unnecessary to give yourself away. There! I have done my lecture, come and kiss me."

She flies into his arms.

"It is terrible when you are annoyed with me, Carol. I should like you to think everything I do or say perfection. But then we cannot have all we want in life, and especially such a delightful life as ours. Do you know, however deeply you love, however constant you may prove, you can never realise your ideal. It exists alone in the realms of fancy; it is as unsubstantial as a dream—in fact, it *is* a dream!"

"Have I disappointed you then?" he asks, with a wounded look.

"Oh, no," raising her eyebrows at the bare idea. "I meant it just the other way—that I have failed to please you in everything. An ideal has no fault, and I appear full of errors. An ideal is something good, holy, perfect. I am bad, unreasonable, foolish."

"You certainly have a way of making a fellow feel a cur without meaning it."

"Have I?" says Eleanor simply.

"Do you ever long to be back in London?" asks Quinton suddenly.

"No—a thousand times no! It is a city of destruction a hell of iniquity, Satan and the Savoy, his satellites Giddy Mounteagle, and——"

"*Me!*"

"Carol," with deep reproach in her tone, "though my life here with you is one which the 'Elizabeths' of Society shun and condemn, I believe in the peaceful atmosphere, the blessed quiet, and sweet unfretful days, I have been a better woman. When I think of the daily quarrels in Richmond, the frivolous worldly conversations of Giddy and her set, it soothes all suspicion of regret in my heart. Love is my only law, and that is described as chief among virtues."

"Then you are happy. I have brought some solace and light into your days, Eleanor? If I died to-morrow, or was lost from sight, you would look back and say: 'He gave me my dearest hours, my most treasured memories. He brought me from the slough of despond to the sunshine of the east.'"

"Yes," she murmurs, quoting her favourite song:

"If you've heard the East a-callin',
You won't never 'eed naught else."

She snatches up her guitar with the light laugh of a girl.

"No, you won't 'eed nothin' else, but them spicy garlic smells,
An' the sunshine an' the palm-trees, an' the tinkly temple bells."

"Come out for a ride," says Carol, "now it is cooler."

Eleanor's face brightens, her eyes glow. He goes so frequently alone, never even telling her the direction he has taken, and answering shortly when questioned. His suggestion meets with her highest approval.

"We will go by the jungle," she says. "You know my favourite road; not past Elizabeth's hut, since her doors will be closed to me henceforth. I shall miss her friendship

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when I am alone, but you must not leave me so often now, and we will ask that nice Major Short and Captain Stevenson to come and see us again."

"So you *are* fond of society still," says Quinton smiling, "though you denied it just now."

"Two congenial spirits are not 'society,'" she replies. "That word comprises people in a bulk. But here are the horses. Doesn't Braye du Valle look splendid? I hope if I died you would let him drag me to my grave."

"Don't be gruesome," says Carol.

"Oh! we *must* take the dog. Where is he? Do go and find him, dear."

"He is such a bothering little beast, we shall be better without him," protests Quinton. "Yesterday he nearly frightened my horse over a precipice, flying into the bushes and fighting with some wild animal. I don't know what it was, but he came out bitten and bleeding. He limped home, leaving a track behind him. Something big rushed away, I shot at it but did not hit it. I don't know how the dog escaped with his life."

"But he is all right to-day, and I want to take him, he is always so busy and amusing," Eleanor persists. "Besides, such a plucky little beggar ought not to be coddled. I think you will find him in my room."

Quinton goes unwillingly. The dog and its vagaries have got on his nerves, though he does not care to own it.

As Eleanor is waiting without she hears the sound of a horse behind, and, turning quickly, is surprised to see a stranger riding up the hill. A tall, handsome woman, well developed, with portly shoulders and large hands. She is riding an immense charger, and whistling gaily. At a second glance Eleanor sees that this masculine young woman is strikingly attractive, her style distinctly original, her figure, though large, splendidly proportioned. She has shiningly white teeth under her curling lips—full, red, and smiling. Her eyes are large, dark, and brilliant, flashing like twin stars under a level brow, with black, almost bushy, eyebrows.

Her complexion is rich and clear, her hair braided in masses under a man's hat. A gun slung over her shoulder gives her a sporting appearance.

She looks curiously at Eleanor's fragile beauty—the contrast between them is marked.

The whistle dies on the stranger's lips, she sets her mouth, averts her head, lashes her steed, and gallops by—never halting till out of sight of the slim woman on Braye du Valle.

"I wonder who she can be?" thinks Eleanor, watching the departing figure so intently that she never notices Carol return with the dog till he speaks:

"What are you looking at?"

His eyes follow the direction of her gaze, but discern only a cloud of dust in the distance.

"A stranger," cries Eleanor excitingly, "a white woman riding alone."

"Really! What was she like?"

"Big, and bold, and handsome. The sort of 'knock you down' woman who balances weights at music-halls in tights. Giddy and Bertie took me once to a box at the Empire; she reminded me of the strong lady in spangles. A magnificent creature, like a splendid animal."

"Oh!" ejaculates Quinton.

"Couldn't you find out who she is, Carol, I would love to know? She gave me such an odd look from her great brave eyes, then, to my astonishment, galloped madly away as if I were going to eat her. She was armed, too, so need not have been afraid, though I don't look much like a savage, do I?"

"I can't see that we need trouble about her."

"She raised my curiosity."

"Simply because of her good looks."

"She was the strangest woman I ever saw. I should like to know more of her."

Quinton jags his horse's mouth angrily, and, calling the dog, rides forward to stop the discussion.

"He has no thought for any woman but me," mentally ejaculates Eleanor, as she follows on Braye du Valle.

She is perfectly satisfied with her lot as she rides beside him, gazing at his handsome profile.

Some sombre-hued birds on the ground fly into the air as they approach. The transformation from dark feathers to brilliant yellow plumage as they spread their wings in flight is pleasing to the eye.

"I love the golden oriole," says Eleanor; "they look like a flash of sunlight. The Eastern birds are very beautiful."

As she speaks there is a low growl from behind.

Simultaneously Eleanor and Carol turn in their saddles, looking sharply at the dog, and then to the thick growth towards which he is stealing, his tail between his legs and his head down.

"I believe that dog is cracked," says Eleanor, calling him back sharply. "I always feel as if some evil spirit were near us when he behaves like that."

"I told you how it would be if we brought him."

"Let us see what he will do."

The dog has taken no heed of her call, but crouches nearer the bushes, bristling all over. Then suddenly he makes a dive into their midst, disappearing from view.

This is followed by a series of shrill barks—the sound as of a dog fighting for its life—a skirmish—a hideous yell—and then—silence.

"Something has killed him!" whispers Eleanor under her breath.

"We had better get on," replies Quinton, "it may be some dangerous beast."

"What! ride off, and perhaps leave the wretched dog mangled and maimed to crawl away and starve? Carol! what are you thinking of?"

She springs to the ground, flings him her reins, and before he realises what she is going to do, rushed into the bushes after her pet.

"Eleanor, are you *mad?*" he thunders, already picturing her devoured by some fierce beast.

It is a moment of horrible suspense. When she emerges, her face scratched by the low boughs, bearing tenderly the limp body of the terrier, torn and bleeding.

"He is quite dead," she says sorrowfully, tears standing in her eyes. "I can see the marks of teeth on his throat."

"Poor little beggar! Do you know you too might be dead at this moment for the sake of recovering the lifeless body of a dog? You must be off your head, Eleanor, to do such an utterly insane thing. Whatever were you thinking of?"

"I was excited—my blood was up. I am like that," she answers apologetically.

They ride silently home.

"We shall miss him," sighs Eleanor at last.

"Who? The dog?"

"Yes. We must let Captain Stevenson know."

"I wonder what animal killed him?"

"I saw nothing, only I fancy I heard a rustle in the trees to my right, and the sound of a horse's hoofs scampering towards the jungle. It may have been only imagination, or perhaps the stalwart lady with the fine eyes was hovering near us."

Quinton's face blanches. He turns to her sharply:

"If you *did* imagine it, I wish you would not romance."

Eleanor is sorry she has told him, since he appears anxious and uncomfortable. He has never been quite the same since his wrestle with the masked man. He is easily startled and alarmed. She blames herself inwardly for want of discretion, and reassures him with a smile.

"Oh! it was nothing, dearest; if anyone had been riding I must have seen him—I mean—her."

Eleanor knows this is not the case, but seeing Carol's relief at the words, does not regret them.

"We must expect adventures now and again," she continues cheerfully, trying to throw off her depression.

"I shall never forget that night," says Carol, "when I

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rode away from you in the dark. I *did* wish I was on Charing Cross Station."

"It was too bad of me; I might have had the sense not to pursue you, sheer idiotcy on my part."

"Has it ever struck you, Eleanor, to wonder how long we shall go on living in this out-of-the way hole?"

She catches her breath.

"No, Carol. I am quite contented to be here, though I suppose in time you will weary of the place, and we shall move elsewhere. Yours is rather a roving spirit, I fear, never happy for long in one spot. I feel rooted to this restful retreat, but directly you tire of it, only say the word, and I will follow you to the end of the world. We have our home here, and there is plenty of sport for you, so I expect we shall jog along for a while!" with a feeble attempt at a laugh. Any signs of discontent on Carol's part fill her with vague dread and suspense.

"Would it not seem strange," he continues, "to go back to England and be respectable? Imagine yourself in a prim little village, posing as a good young widow, playing Lady Bountiful to the poor, and being called on by the county magnates, while I lived a virtuous bachelor life in the dreary precincts of Clifford's Inn."

"Apart! *Us* apart!" gasps Eleanor.

"My love, I was only 'supposing.' But isn't the idea ludicrous, quite too funny and absurd? *You* romanced first, I am only following your lead. I have heard respectability termed 'the curse of pleasure.' It kills enjoyment, breeds hypocrisy, fosters discontent, revolutionises Bohemia!"

Eleanor dislikes his flippancy. The picture he has drawn bewilders her. The thought of life without Carol is hideous, impossible. Her usual spirits flag.

"Why are you so dull and down, darling?"

"You make me so!"

"It seems, Eleanor, you can never take a joke."

All the glamour of her present happiness has faded under the saddening influence of Carol's "joke!" But she will not own it is that which distresses her.

"I do not see an animal I know and care for bitten to death every day, and that poor little dog was so attached to me. I wish I had given him the extra biscuit he begged for this morning. I told him he was greedy, and hid it away."

She goes sadly into the house and dresses for dinner in a dainty robe of white muslin cut low at the neck, for Quinton's benefit.

The sudden necessity for looking beautiful, and making herself pleasant and fascinating, comes over her like a nightmare. Her throat is parched. Her temples burn.

The gown is soft and clinging, the effect fairylike and picturesque. Quinton never sees her in this simple garb without an exclamation of approval.

She creeps behind him in the verandah, twining her bare arms round his neck.

He looks at her admiringly, as he would at a picture which gladdens the eye for a moment.

"How late it is," she whispers, kneeling beside him. "Cook is frantic, for all our dinner is spoiled; we were out a long while."

Quamina, who only talks a smattering of English, rushes into the verandah, wringing her hands. Her black lips tremble, her eyes start from her head.

"Oh! Sahib! Sahib!" she cries, "the big black devil that tracks the Sahib, he rode up the hill, *there!*" pointing with outstretched fingers.

Quinton starts to his feet.

"Where?" he asks, looking out but seeing nothing. "What do you mean?"

But Quamina continues to shake and cry, moaning: "The devil, he has come for the Sahib!"

(To be continued.)

RESULT of PICTURE PUZZLE.

The Puzzle Picture Competition, announced in Short Stories, dated March 14th, has been very successful. All those attempts received up till March 12th were examined together, and the neatest of those correct was sent in by Mr. W. T. Wilson, 84, Warner Road, St. James's Street, Walthamstow, to whom a cheque for £10 has been forwarded. The fifty competitors whose names are appended sent in correct solutions, and have each been awarded a gold plated pencil-case for the neatness of their attempts.

J. E. Miller, 18, Melford Street, Barry, near Cardiff; W. H. Power, 67, Vauxhall Bridge Road, S.W.; Miss B. Perrett, 4, The Cedars, Clapham Common; S. E. Burt, 1, Springfield Gardens, Upper Clapton; G. W. Banks, Wright's Row, Walkington, Surrey; S. E. Webb, 126, Ashford Street, Shelton, Stoke-on-Trent; Miss S. J. Booth, 24, George Street, Bolton, Lancashire; R. Thomson, 20, Glen Street, Edinburgh; M. F. Gandy, 59, Langley Road, Luton; Mrs. W. Unwin, 13, Cathcart Street, Hall Park, Paddington; Mrs. M. de Mattos, Steamshall, Highgate; Miss E. Blogg, Marsh House, Newbury, Bucks.; W. Richardson, 42, East Road, Egremont, *via* Carnforth; Miss A. Greenwood, 80, Sewerby Street, Moss Side, Manchester; J. Coulter, 38, Balfour Street, Leith Walk, Edinburgh; P. L. Goddard, 1, Lenobia Mansions, Queen's Club Gardens, North Kensington; George Thomson, 20, Glen Street, Edinburgh; G. T. Somerville, 17A, Great George Street, Westminster; O. L. Lacour, 2, Chester Villas, Bridgeman Road, Teddington; T. Bonell, Pengwern, Glynfield Road, Harlesden; Mrs. Calder, 9, Bowhill Terrace, Goldenacre, Edinburgh; J. Thornton, 79, Dashwood Road, Stewart's Road; W. C. Houghton, 75, Highbury Quadrant, N.; Mrs. Le Hedchins, 27, Ecclesbourne Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey; H. Powell, Southill Park, Biggleswade, Beds.; A. E. Bowles, 35, Weston Street, Bradford; C. Walters, 2, Frederick Place, Hereson Road, Ramsgate; W. Gill, 78, Salisbury Road, Cathays, Cardiff; Miss B. C. Smythe, St. Ann's House, Lewes; Miss M. Harney, 15, Lorwayne Road, St. John's Hill, S.W.; F. B. Herring, 20, Birchin Lane, Cornhill; A. Laing, 212, Queen's Road, Dalston; A. Hook, 9, Canterbury Place, Lambeth Road, S.E.; Mrs. E. Smith, The Rectory, Carr Hill, Gateshead; Professor Michael, 48, High Street, Ramsgate; Miss C. M. V. Morris, St. Clare's Cottage, Pauhsaph, near Holywell, N. Wales; J. Wallace, Garrick Club, 132, Prince's Street, Edinburgh; G. D. Strachan, 39, Clifton Place, Shipley Yorks; G. K. Stubbs, 29, Park Street, Macclesfield; T. Somers, 39, Queen's Square, Bloomsbury, W.C.; W. J. Young, Beetham, Milnthorpe, Westmoreland; F. J. Gill, 49, King William Street, London Bridge; J. W. Lewis, Oswald Road, Oswestry, Salop; H. Jones, 74, Victoria Dock Road, E.; W. C. Sellin, 196, Cheltenham Road, Bristol; W. Robinson, 3, Landseer Street, Battersea Park Road; H. J. Payne, 9, Eastbourne Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire; Mrs. F. T. Townsend, Thirlwell Mount, Sheffield; Mrs. Doherty, 12, Moss Street, Garston, near Liverpool.

Here is the key:

37	48	26	8	15	33	46	17
81	66	51	31	22	71	57	4
13	54	63	69	42	19	6	73
35	2	67	24	9	39	45	59
20	30	27	87	83	50	85	76
88	16	43	86	65	79	61	7
53	55	78	1	10	52	23	18
64	38	74	11	56	84	34	12
58	40	28	47	72	3	21	29
25	70	82	60	75	62	80	44
5	32	77	98	68	14	64	41

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How is it done? By buying in immense quantities for cash. By selling in immense quantities. By getting recommendations from everyone. How many Machines does an ordinary shop keep or sell in a week? Perhaps three or four. How many do we sell **in a day? In one day alone** we sold **2,700**; and we have got the orders and will prove it to anyone. There is an enormous profit on Sewing Machines. There must be. A man cannot keep a shop and give credit, take monthly instalments and risk, unless there is. Owing to the enormous quantity we buy we get Machines for next to nothing, and if we can sell on an average 500 Machines a day at 1/- each profit, it pays us. You can go to a shop and pay £3 3s. for a Machine, or you can come to us and get one just as good for 21/-. Come and see them and prove it for yourselves, or send for one of our lists and read the hundreds of testimonials sent to us. No one can do what we are doing. Your neighbours will tell you it is impossible. Well, write to any of the hundreds of customers we give the names and addresses of. Don't take our word for it. Prove it true or false. We offer for the next 21 days to send to anyone who cuts out the coupon below and sends it to us with 21/- one of our SUPERB FAMILY LOCKSTITCH SEWING MACHINES, very best quality and fully guaranteed, with best boat-shaped shuttle, patent winder, stop feed, large fly-wheel on handsome stand. These Machines can be used either by hand or treadle. Every Machine tested and sent out packed free of charge for 21/-. Can you get such an offer anywhere else? No. Don't miss this grand opportunity, which is only offered for 21 days, during our Special Sale. No reduction on quantity, as we do not see more than 1/- clear profit on each Machine. Extra Needles, 1/- dozen; extra Spools, 3 for 6d.; Can of Special Oil, 6d.; extra Cotton, 1/- dozen reels. Remember what we offer. A full-size Family Lockstitch Sewing Machine, perfect and packed free of charge for 21/- if ordered within 21 days. Coupon as below to be cut out and sent with order. Don't buy a Machine anywhere else till you have see our list. Specimen of work, full particulars, and testimonials sent on receipt of 1d. for postage.

THEOBALD'S SPECIAL SALE COUPON.

SHORT STORIES.

This Coupon entitles holder to One Machine as above for 21/-.

(Signed) J. THEOBALD & Co.

MESSRS. J. THEOBALD & CO.,

Wholesale Manufacturers,

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GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

TO THE DEAF.

A Gentleman who cured himself of Deafness and Noises in the Head after fourteen years' suffering, will gladly send full particulars of the remedy post free.—Address, H. CLIFTON, Amberley House, Norfolk Street, Strand, London, W.C.

HAVE YOU A POST CARD?

If not, please obtain one, and send it to

THE PEARSON POTTERY CO.,

HANLEY,

with your name and address on the back, and you will receive by next post full particulars of the most wonderful package of crockery the world has ever seen.

100 PIECES FOR £1 1s.

100 PIECES FOR £1 1s.

A Dinner Service of 50 pieces is included, which is guaranteed to be worth the guinea alone, and a China Tea Service of 28 pieces, finished in gold, together with a lot of useful kitchen crockery.

The Secret of the Success.—The Pearson Pottery Company are manufacturers, not middlemen, like many other advertisers. The Pearson Potteries have nearly 2,000ft. frontage to the town of Hanley.

Thousands sold all over the world. Everybody not only satisfied, but amazed at the quantity and quality given.

Hundreds of these packages are applied for as **Wedding or Birthday Presents.** And what more useful present can be given? Every item is useful.

Post Cards and Letters to be addressed to the

PEARSON POTTERY COMPANY, HANLEY.

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WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

Where does strength come from? Where does energy come from? The word "strength" is derived from the Saxon, the word "energy" from the Greek. But that isn't the main point. It is not words we want to talk about now, it is the thing itself. We all know what we mean by it. Where does it come from? What makes it? Let us try to get at that. Right under my hand are two letters, with fifty more within reach, all complaining of a want of strength and energy. Why, what's coming to ail people? Was this the form things were in when England was some generations younger?

"I felt," says one, "no life or energy for anything. This was in July, 1892. I was below par and wasting away. My appetite was poor, and I had a loathing and disgust for food of every sort. No matter how simple the meal was, I had heaviness and pain in the chest after eating it. With this was pain at the pit of the stomach, which nothing that I took relieved. My hands and feet were cold and clammy; the blood in my veins seemed to have no heat in it.

"Then I began to lose flesh rapidly, and got so weak I could hardly walk. One day in May, 1893, whilst visiting a relative at Everton, I vomited over a pint of blackish blood. In great alarm I saw a doctor, who said it was an accumulation of blood in the stomach. In this condition I remained until February last, when I read in the *Gymrcig*, a Welsh newspaper, about the efficacy of Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup in cases like mine. I got the medicine from Mr. Williams, chemist, Westminster Road, and after taking it a few days was greatly relieved. I felt like eating, and what I ate sat upon my stomach easily. It digested, and gave me no trouble or distress. I can now eat anything, and am well and strong as ever. (Signed) R. M. Davies, 31, St. Hilda Street, Westminster Road, Liverpool, July 25th, 1894."

Here is the second letter. "In the early part of 1884," it runs, "I was so heavy, languid, and weak that I couldn't imagine what ailed me. My mouth tasted bad. I was often sick, vomiting a dark, bitter fluid, and my teeth and gums were covered with phlegm, so thick it nearly choked me. I couldn't eat, and my stomach was puffed and swollen, and there was a horrible gnawing pain in it. My kidneys troubled me, too, and I had difficulty in voiding the secretion from them. Sometimes the pain low down in my back was so cruel I couldn't straighten myself out. I dared not eat. I loathed the very sight of food, and for days together I never took a bite. I got so weak I could scarcely stand, and so thin that my clothes ceased to fit me—they merely hung on me.

"I took all sorts of drugs and had medical treatment without benefit.

"In March, 1889, after having suffered five years, a book was left at my shop telling about Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. I had no faith in advertised medicines, but I got a bottle at Mr. Thompson's Drug Stores, Manchester Road, and after taking it a few days my appetite revived, and my food agreed with me. I kept on taking it, and soon all symptoms of disease left me, and I got back my strength. I will answer any inquiries about my case. (Signed) R. Adams, 24, West Street, Oldham, Lancs., September 11th, 1894."

What ailed these men on their own showing? What ails millions more, whether they understand it or not? Indigestion, dyspepsia, and the ailments that grow out of it—that and nothing else. Hence weakness, loss of strength and energy, of course. For where does strength come from? It comes from digested food. And what enables one to digest his food? Mother Seigel's Syrup. A host of witnesses testify to that. So you have the question and the right answer.

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NEW SERIAL JUST STARTED.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 380. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 11TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

WHAT NEXT?

M-E-grants 0 2 C B-4 leaving for 4-n lands that they R 40-fied with ... BEECHAM'S PILLS.

If your N-R-G and vigour R D-K-ing Y not try the F-E-K-C of ... BEECHAM'S PILLS.

It is S-N-tial when U R feeling X, X-I-ted, and P-vish, that you keep your I on ... ... BEECHAM'S PILLS.

A sick headache 12-nt X-10 d over many minutes if 5 my box of ... BEECHAM'S PILLS.

If F-8 is not smiling B-9-ly on your L-th, there's 0 can 20 like a dose of BEECHAM'S PILLS.

U can't S-tim-8 the good F-ects that M-N-8 from a regular use of ... BEECHAM'S PILLS.

It is X-asper-8-ting in the L-M-N-tary stage of indigestion 2 find U R without ... ... BEECHAM'S PILLS.

When stomachic pains W up, there's 0 can X-L an M-E-D-8 course of BEECHAM'S PILLS.

If I C P-ple J-ded and nervous I soon make them C-rene and G-nial with ... ... BEECHAM'S PILLS.

If U R troubled with an X-S of Bile, there's no Rem-E-D so X-P-D-ent or cer-10 as... ... ... BEECHAM'S PILLS.

If U R a Y-T-brown colour O-N to liver complaint, U 0 2 S-A to take a course of ... ... BEECHAM'S PILLS.

E-rad-E-K-8 Biliousness and O-D-S Flat-U-os-E-T by Y-s courses of BEECHAM'S PILLS.

In keeping up an X-U-B-rance of spirits U can't B Y Y, there-4 U R asked to take ... ... BEECHAM'S PILLS.

If U don't wish to D-V-8 from Lth U 0 cer-10-ly, B-4 an X-E-jen-C occurs, 2 try ... ... BEECHAM'S PILLS.

By O-B-D-ence 2 instructions, your ailments will B taken B-4 by the op-R-A-tions of... ... ... BEECHAM'S PILLS.

U-ll find this U-lo-G no M-T talk, B-gin 2-day 2 C U R benefited by that X-L-C-R Rem-E-Dy ... ... BEECHAM'S PILLS.

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THE JOHN NOBLE HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES

Direct from the Largest Firm of Costume Manufacturers in the world, have secured beyond a doubt the **ADMIRATION OF THE WORLD.** Being Absolutely Without an Equal Anywhere for Stylish Appearance, Durability, and Actual Money Value. **10/6**

TWO GOLD MEDALS AWARDED.

These Costumes have received the highest praise from the leading journals of the day, and are justly regarded by all purchasers as **Even Better than Advertised.**

Each Costume scientifically cut, tailor-made, and beautifully finished in an exceedingly smart mode, as illustration. The design consists of full wide Godet skirt with belt, also very neat bodice with full front and broad box-pleat down centre, trimmed bold silk cord and three large buttons. Collar and cuffs outlined silk cord; saddle and sleeves lined.

Price complete only **10/6**, safely packed and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra.

Sizes in stock fit figures measuring 34, 36, or 38 in. round bust under arms, skirts being 38, 40, and 42 in. long in front; larger or special sizes made to measure, 1/6 extra.

THE JOHN NOBLE

COSTUMES FOR YOUNG MISSES

are made in the John Noble Cheviot Serge, and trimmed military braid as illustration. A large box-pleat down the centre of the linen bodice, and a fancy pocket at each side of the skirt, complete a charming design at FROM **8/6**

these prices:

Lengths	35	38	42	46	50 inches.
Prices	8/6	9/6	10/9	12/-	13/6 each.

Each costume safely packed and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra

KNOCKABOUT FROCKS FOR GIRLS

are also supplied in the **John Noble Cheviot Serge,** with saddle top, long full sleeves, and pocket, at following prices: FROM **1/6**

Lengths	21	24	27	30	33	36	39	42	45 in.
Prices	1/6	2/-	2/6	3/-	3/6	4/-	4/6	5/-	5/6 ea.

Postage 1½d. extra. Lengths stated above are from top of neckband to bottom of skirt in front.

COLOURS: Any of the above garments can be supplied in **Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Bronze Green, Electric Blue, Ruby, Dark Cinnamon, Fawn, or Grey.**

The JOHN NOBLE CHEVIOT SERGE in which the above garments are made is a fabric of world-wide fame and durability, measuring 52in. wide. The full Dress Length of Six Yards can be supplied for 7/6, or any length at 1/3 the yard. Colours as above. **7/6**

PATTERNS, also **FASHION SHEETS** of numerous other designs in Ladies' and Children's Costumes, etc., sent Post Free on application. *Please mention "Short Stories" when ordering.*

JOHN NOBLE LTD., Brook St. Mills, **MANCHESTER.**

MRS. LAWRENCE

A Farmer's Wife, writes from Mid-Rasen, Lincolnshire: "For a long time I suffered severely from

INDIGESTION

And WIND IN THE STOMACH, and had to call in the doctor. Having prescribed for me some time he said, 'I can do nothing more for you.' My husband urged me to try your WIND PILLS; he brought me a box and I took them. In a few days I was quite well and able to get up, and now enjoy excellent health. Publish my name and address."

Page Woodcock's Wind Pills

Being purely Vegetable, Tasteless, Mild, and Tonic, may be taken with perfect safety by the most delicate of either sex.

ALL SUFFERERS from INDIGESTION, LIVER COMPLAINTS, WIND ON THE STOMACH, BILIOUSNESS, SICK HEADACHE, PALPITATION OF THE HEART, etc.,

should avail themselves of this most excellent medicine.

Of all Chemists, at **1s. 1½d.** and **2s. 9d.** Post Free for Price from PAGE WOODCOCK, LINCOLN.

TRILENE REGD. TABLETS. THE ONLY CURE for STOUTNESS Registered by GOVERNMENT Price 2/6

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Readily **Reduce Weight** and **Cure Corpulency Permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to **PRESERVE** both **HEALTH** and **FIGURE** without change of diet. **Reduction begins immediately.**

An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*" Send 2/6 to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY

BUNTER'S NERVINE

Prevents Decay. Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented. Neuralgic Headache and all Nerve Pains Removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.

TO TOBACCONISTS COMMENCING.

£20

See Illus. Guide and Catalogue (259 pages), 3d. "How to Open a Cigar Store, from £20 to £2,000." TOBACCONISTS' OUTFITTING CO., 186, Euston Road, London. (Over 50 years' reputation.) Manager, H. MYERS.

S.S. S.S.

PEARSON'S

£100

COUPON.

No. 15

April 11, 1896.

S.S. S.S.

HAIR DESTROYED.

A doctor's widow knows of a simple, inexpensive remedy that permanently destroys the roots, and will forward particulars free to all those afflicted sending stamped envelope. Address Mrs. B. D. WOOD, 4, DUKE STREET, VILLIERS STREET, LONDON, W.

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If so, wear the "*A.D.*" Invisible Elevators (Regd.). Will increase your height up to four inches; the only approved means; detection impossible; simple, inexpensive. Send stamped envelope for particulars to the ORIENTAL TOILET CO. (B 5 Dept.), 87, Strand, London.

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OUR NEW ILLUSTRATED MANUAL mailed free upon request, showing how these profits may be made WITHOUT SPECULATION. Cheques for profits mailed promptly 1st of each month, and for withdrawals of capital on 2nd and 16th of each month. Trial investments of £5 and upwards may be made.

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Quickly transformed and a good figure permanently obtained by a perfectly harmless, simple, and inexpensive self-treatment. Success guaranteed. For particulars, free, send stamped envelope in confidence to "Madame B. J.," Oriental Toilet Co., 87, Strand, London.

HAIR DESTROYED

permanently and absolutely by an entirely new and harmless self-treatment, total destruction guaranteed. Particulars free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. Prof. F. T. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

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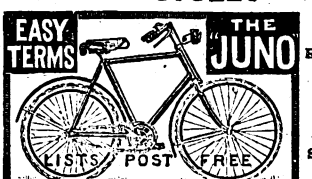
Are the very Best.



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Send at once for JUNO Catalogue, sent post free to any part of the world, interesting and valuable to all. METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS' CO., LTD., 75 and 76, Bishopsgate Without, London, E.C.

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Permanently cured. A Pamphlet giving sound practical advice and particulars of a successful treatment for a rapid, simple, and inexpensive home-cure, forwarded free to all upon receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—Prof. B. L. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

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A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs. "T. D.," 87 Strand, London.

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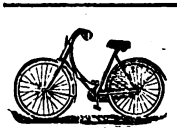
Permanently cured in a few days by a simple, inexpensive self-treatment. Particulars free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope to Dr. A. M. CURTIS, York Chambers, Adelphi, London, W.C.



AJAX CYCLES FOR LADIES & GENTLEMEN

ARE RICH VALUE. 25 to 30 per cent. saved and carriage paid.

IMMENSE STOCK, NEW AND SECOND HAND.

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Now Open.—LARGE CYCLING SCHOOLS, at 42, High Street, Camden Town, LONDON, and at Liverpool.

BRITISH CYCLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY,
42, High Street, Camden Town, London, N.W., and 45, Everton Road, Liverpool.

No. 380.—One Penny. April 11, 1896.

S S SHORT STORIES

DIANA.

Straight as an Indian arrow, large-limbed and tall, with that peculiar white skin which does not tan nor grow sallow: the first Diana was not more superbly made than this one. A combination of masculine strength and feminine beauty—not feminine enough to be wholly woman, nor masculine enough to be wholly man. Her dress was half one and half the other. A man's black slouch hat covered her head, and a man's black coat protected her shoulders; a petticoat of thick, dark stuff hid the rest of her graceful form down to the ankles of her boot-shod feet.

She rode a huge black stallion, a creature as splendid and fiery and scornful as the woman that fearlessly bestrode his back.

She was Diana; the horse's name was "Satan." Diana loved Satan and Satan loved Diana. It was said that neither of them loved any other living thing, and certainly no other living thing loved either of them.

Diana pulled the rein and Satan stopped with one forefoot uplifted. They looked like an ebony-statued Centaur. Before them the sun was setting—sinking—sliding down a little and a little into the farthermost edge of the plain.

The halo of the sky slipped down to the earth and spread over the hot ground and the brown dead clover. It crept to the feet of the Centaur, and over its black glossy hide, and stole into the face of the woman. The scorn, the defiance faded out of it and softened the hard lines of masculine force, the Centaur was transfigured.

A broad-branched oak—the only tree for miles round—stood near; a man, close followed by a sheep dog, stepped from behind. He made no noise and was not seen. He was sunburnt, and unshorn, and roughly dressed. There was an odd twitching of the muscles about his mouth, and as he watched the process of transformation in the woman's face, its spirit leapt into his own.

He reached forth his hands and cried out, "Diana."

Was it the reflection of the sunset in her cheeks, or simply returning animation, or did she hear?

She touched the rein and Satan bounded forward, the ebony Centaur was a passive transfiguration no longer. It was again the splendid, scornful defiant creature, hating humanity and smiting the earth with contemptuous feet.

The man with the sheep dog looked after her a little while, then walked slowly away, taking an opposite direction.

A voice, both jest and jeer, struck his ears.

"See, Bill, looks as if he was walkin' home in the shadow of his coffin, and Shep sneeks along as though he had been stealing sheep."

The man to whom the words were addressed looked out, then dropped his eyes and answered in a lower tone and softer voice than the other: "Don't joke him to-night, Brassy, he's in one of his bad ways. I wouldn't wonder if he'd seen that woman again. It's enough to make one think she's a ghost haunting him the way he looks after he's seen her."

An hour later the moon was full, and the men sat outside the cabin, two of them taking their after-supper smoke. The mysterious calm of the breezeless night had put upon them its spell of silence. Bill sat with bowed head, and whittled mechanically on a small piece of wood, while Dainty held a cigarette caressingly between his thumb and forefinger, and blew contented little puffs of smoke away from his mouth. Brassy tugged and puffed at an old pipe, and watched Bill from under the rim of his hat.

Suddenly, Dainty jumped up and threw away his cigarette. "Boys," said he, "let's take the dogs over to the river and tree a wild-cat."

Brassy pocketed his pipe immediately. "Right, me lord, I'm yours, when it's wild-cats you talk. And if Bill wants to go, the triumvirate's agreed; if he don't—

"He may sigh to the winds, to the Goddess Dinna,
But his days they will end on the isle of St. Helena!"

He sang the lines of the old-fashioned, long-out-of-date song in harsh, unmusical voice, and it might have been the melody that made Bill start so suddenly that he overturned the stool on which he sat; it might have been the moonlight that made him pale.

An hour, two hours, three, of tramping, and not a wild cat was amiable enough to tree and be killed. Tired out, they started home.

"Listen, don't you hear a curious sound?" said Dainty. They stopped and listened, but only for a moment.

"Merciful God!" shouted Brassy, "run for your lives, it's King's River overflowing!"

They sprang forward and ran swiftly in spite of brush, and briars, and many stumblings. "If we could only get to the slough first," panted Brassy.

The dry bed of the slough was only a few hundred feet beyond, but a wall of water higher than their heads was rolling down with terrible swiftness upon them. The water from the river overtook them and lapped round their feet and up to their waists. It was useless now to try to reach the slough, impossible to cross it if they could; that crackling muffled roar was too near. They were between two floods; it was a moment to act

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without deciding. With one accord Bill and Brassy caught Dainty and hoisted him into the forks of a large sapling, by the side of which they had stopped, and scudded up after him. A minute later they were in the midst of a mile-wide waste of fast-rising water. Behind them was the terrible, swift, rolling river, whose head was in the heart of eternal snows; before them the slough, over which they had walked dry-footed three hours before, rolled another river, swift flowing, muddy, ice-cold, and deadly deep. The sapling swayed and bent with their weight, sometimes dipping them into the chilling water, and shook and shivered to its topmost twig when some floating object struck against it.

Higher rose the flood and swathed their soaked garments about them; it was cold—bitingly cold—and the night was so balmy and warm, and the moonlight soft and beautiful.

"Partners," said Dainty very gently, "if I don't get out of this, and you do, divide my sheep between you. There's none akin to me, nobody in the world to shed for me if I die.

"I feel, somehow, that it will be that way—you two will get out, and I won't."

"And I feel, somehow, that nary one of us ever did sich a mean trick, and we ain't going to commence now."

Dainty smiled a faint little smile, like a pleased child. The moon went down at last and left them in the twilight of the dawn.

Still the water rose, and still they clung closer to the sapling, Bill holding on as tightly as either of the others.

In sheer weariness of living we may cry out for death to come, but when it comes to us and looks square in our faces, we would rather it waited a little longer; not much longer, maybe—perhaps only until we have accomplished one other thing that we would not leave undone—but surely a little longer.

When the first red streak of day shot down into the mountain mists and glowed through the clear atmosphere of the plains, only from shoulders up were the men above the water.

And then everything on the plains before them was lighted up and transformed by the peculiar mirage which was one of the characteristics of the region. Objects, which a moment before would have been indiscernible with magnifying aid, stood out clear and distinct to the naked eye and with a nearness that was startling. The huts of the scattering sheep camps were a city of palaces in air, streeted like Venice, with water, and surrounded with gardens and trees.

The hut, which stood half a mile directly beyond their camp, was standing on the top of theirs with inverted roof. The sheep walked on stilts, and the legs of the cattle and horses were twenty feet long at least. Bill watched it with an interested, studying expression in his eyes. "I doubt," said he, "if there is another place where these peculiar phenomena of mirage appear." It was the first that either of them had spoken for more than an hour.

"I've been figuring a little, mentally," he went on, "on the water question, and, according to my reckoning, we have about thirty-five minutes before the muddy stuff gets into our nostrils."

Brassy made a grimace at this information, and Dainty closed his eyes and whispered: "Dear God, Thy will be done." His face was purple—spotted with cold.

For another five minutes there was silence; then Brassy started so perceptibly that the sapling trembled and made ripples about their necks.

In a terrified whisper, he repeated the words from Revelations: "'And when he had opened the third seal I heard the third voice say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo! a black horse, and he that sat upon him had a pair of balances in his hand.' And I see the black horse and the rider with the balances; look straight ahead of your eyes, and see them yourself."

They both looked as directed, and beheld a most singular phenomenon. Fifteen or twenty feet above the ground, like a black cameo set in air, startlingly distinct was a giant black horse and a black rider, with something in his hand. It was headed towards the river and in the attitude of a long swinging lope.

As instantly as the mirage had appeared as instantly it vanished. Quicker than the wink of an eye the city of palaces dissolved into the huts of the scattering sheep-camps, the sheep were brown ants running over the plain, and the colossal phantom of the air a moving black dot on the earth. The faces of both Bill and Dainty suddenly paled. One thought he had seen into the unseen world, the other knew he had not.

Brassy and Dainty kept their eyes strained upon the horse; Bill kept his as resolutely away; yet he knew as surely as they, that it was coming towards them, and very fast. Once the horse stopped, and the rider swept the river border with a field-glass, pocketed it again, and came on faster than before. Above the roar of the water they could hear the clattering ring of the hoofs as they sent the dust and clods flying from the brown earth.

At last, with sweat-wet flanks and foam-speckled mouth, Satan stopped short on the high bank of the slough, and Diana, shading her eyes with her right hand was looking straight at the faces in the water.

Brassy tried to wave his hand and give a shout, but only succeeded in making a little gurgling noise in the water, Dainty murmured: "Thank God!" Bill's face turned a chalky grey. He made no other sign. Diana took in with one swift, surveying glance, the terrible situation of the men—the dangerous, floating *débris* lodging against the tops of the undergrowth beneath the water, and the treacherous slough at her feet—then dashed away up the stream.

Dainty looked at her with a sort of helpless resignation. Brassy heaved a great sigh. "I wish she hadn't gone; it's no use, she never can get help here in time to do us any good. By Heavens! she's coming to us, God bless her!"

"God save her," said Dainty.

A hundred yards or so above them, Diana was hastily throwing off her boots and heaviest outer garments; taking the bridle from the horse's ears, she slipped it down over his nose and flung it on the ground by the garments, and, sticking her heels into his flanks with the *abandon* of a vaquero, tried to rush him over the river bank. He snorted and reared up on his hind feet, standing so straight that Diana had to clasp her arms round his neck to keep from sliding off behind. He was a wonderfully trained animal, and he never before refused to obey Diana—the river terrified him out of his training and loyalty. Again she tried to rush him over, and again he plunged and reared; snorting with terror, he whirled his huge body round and headed away from the river.

Diana wore a large silk handkerchief round her neck; this she untied and twisted about his nose for a rein; then whirled round and came dashing back at full

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speed. Just at the river bank she leant forward and shouted to him something in a foreign tongue, and over they went horse and woman into the flood, and sank in it out of sight. The men watching forgot their own peril.

"Father in Heaven, save her!" whispered Dainty. It was but a moment until they rose to the surface, and struck out diagonally across the current, straight towards the heads in the water. The long black hair of the woman had tumbled down to her waist, and made a black cloak for her wet white shoulders. Her arms, reached forward to guide the horse, shone ivory white in the new-born sunbeams; a Nereid guiding her sea-horse back to the sea.

Diana guided Satan by patting the sides of his face, first with one hand, then with the other, caressing his neck with her bare, perfect arms, and talking coaxingly, encouragingly to him, all the time keeping his nose pointed directly towards the heads.

Nearer and nearer—she is within speaking distance—"Billy," the voice was strangely sweet, and soft, and rich, commingling like a prayer and a command, "when we get even with you pull yourself on behind me." He caught the back of the saddle, and with much difficulty pulled himself upon the horse as the strangely sweet voice had bidden him; no other word was spoken. The horse sank a little deeper and struggled a little harder to swim with his doubled burden.

At a point considerably below them the high bank flattened out and the water ran over, making a sort of swamp; to this Diana steered. The moment they touched land Bill slipped to the ground as quickly as his numbed limbs would let him. Diana handed him a small flask of brandy, which she took from a pocket in her queerly fashioned toilet. Their hands touched as he took it, and one instant their eyes looked into each other's.

A momentary blush spread over both faces, leaving them whiter by contrast.

She started Satan back up the slough, and Bill stood grasping the litttle silver flask, with hands too shaky to get it to his mouth. Was it the cold numbness that made him tremble so? He was a very steady-nerved man, but he was very cold. The numbness and the trembling got into his brain now, and a ringing in his ears, and from some far-off land, in some far-off time he heard a voice—his or some other's—saying: "We will neither speak to the other, nor of the other, till one of us is dead."

This time the horse made no resistance, but leapt over the bank and struck bravely out into the current. Diana guided him carefully as before, and her face was as pale and as set, but the illumination of a heroic resolve had faded out of it, leaving only the patience of self-imposed duty. Relieved of Bill's weight the sapling slightly raised, and the shoulders of Brassy and Dainty were above water. Eagerly they watched the approaching Nereid; she was bringing them deliverance or more sudden death. Once the horse swerved in his course, and once the brush of a floating limb left a long red scratch on Diana's arm, when she pushed it out of their way.

"Brassy will come next; the tree will hold up the lighter man the longest," the voice might have come from the mouth of a sphinx so hard and lifelessly calm it was.

Thus it was in spite of Brassy's assertions that both of Dainty's partners went out and left him.

Brassy was landed safely by the side of Bill, who apparently had not moved a step. He still held the silver flask, but he did not look into Diana's face, nor did she into his. When she started back on the third perilous venture, he heard again, in the ringing of his ears, the voice from that far-away time: "We will neither of us speak to the other, nor of the other, till one of us is dead."

Again the brave horse leapt over into the cold, stilli-rising flood, and horse and rider again went out of sight. They were longer coming up this time, and made the way slower and with much greater effort. Satan was tired and Diana too. She did not speak when nearing Dainty, to tell him to get on behind her, only motioned that he should, with a wave of her hand. When they were safely started homewards Brassy could not forbear a glad shout, and flung out his draggle-sleeved arms with a joyous "Hooray!"

In the swiftest current, not more than thirty yards from the shore, all at once the horse stopped swimming and they went down, so suddenly that Bill and Brassy rubbed their eyes, thinking their senses must have cheated them. Drowning people rise three times to the surface; these did not come up at all. Once Dainty's hand pushed through the water. Bill started to it, Brassy held him back.

"Don't, Bill, it's no use," he said.

Bill fought to get free, and in the scuffle both came near falling into the slough.

Presently Bill's hands dragged limply to his sides. "You're right, it's no use; go for help, I'll stay and watch for them."

Many hours afterwards, men came with a boat, and grappling-hooks, but not until the flood abated were the bodies found.

Dainty was hauled out first; when Brassy saw him a queer little cry escaped him. He took his partner's head in his hands, and the tears ran streaming down his cheeks; it was the first time in his life that he could not speak. Diana was brought out next, and laid on the hot sand by the side of Dainty. The water had washed her hair down on each side of her head, crossed it under her chin, and swathed it round her neck, making a dripping black frame for her face. Thou art a mighty artist, Death!

Bill stood silently looking down upon her; suddenly a trembling seized him, like a dumb animal that has struck a blow over its brain.

Out of that far-off life he heard his own voice saying: "We will neither of us speak to the other, nor of the other, till one of us is dead."

"Diana, Diana!" the words were a pitying cry, hoarse and full of pain; perhaps none but the dead heard. The men were very busy.

The bodies were buried on a large knoll, not far from the spot, where they were dragged from the river. At the head of Diana's grave Bill put up a redwood cross on which he carved with his knife, and stained the letters red, "Diana." And under the lonely name these lines:

> In every form of the human
> Some hint of the highest dwells.

It was all over at last, except the nightmare horror of it; and Bill and Brassy again sat out in the moonlight by their cabin. Bill leant against the wall. Brassy wrestled with the old pipe until he could not any longer endure the silence, and blurted out his thought. "I wonder what made her do it."

Slowly Bill answered: "She used to be my wife."

Madge Morris.

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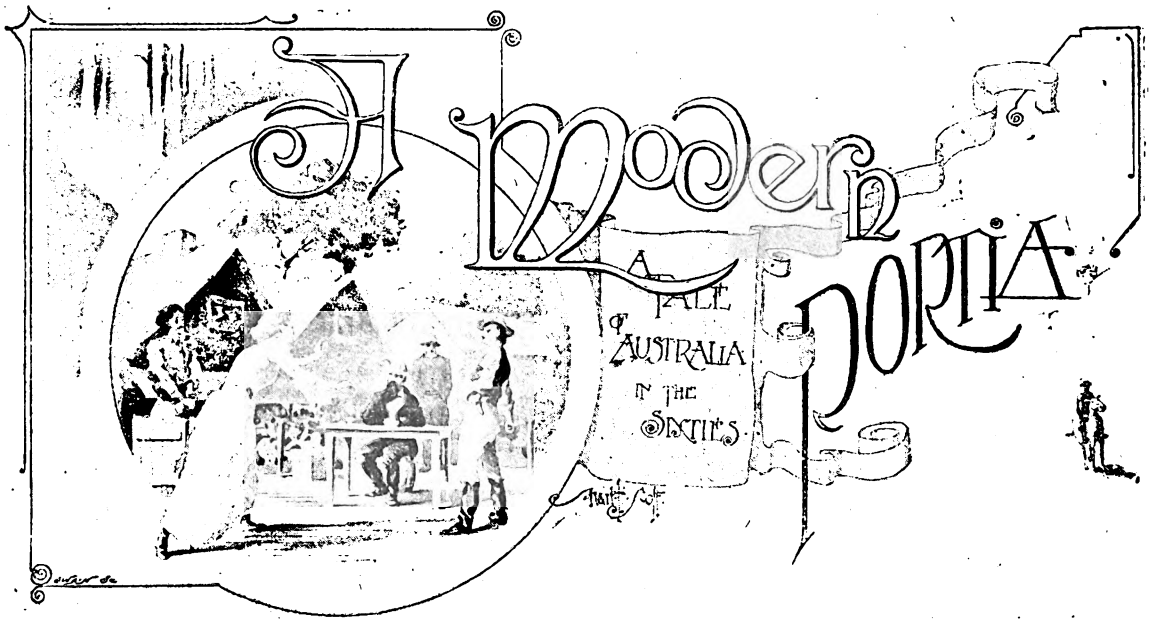

It fell upon him as a bolt from the blue. Never had such a contingency entered his mind. So remote was the probability of comparative poverty, that the knowledge of his father's failure to avert long-impending ruin, and of that father's cowardice, fear to face the future, inability to cope with his enormous financial difficulties, and want of the stamina and courage necessary to undertake the rebuilding of the wreck of his shattered fortune, came upon young Harry Sanderson with a crash. For a little while he was as one dazed. The thunder of the revelation dinned in his ears, shutting out the power of thought. And scarcely had he understood its full import to himself and his own future career, before the second bolt struck him—his father, knowing that the ultimate result would inevitably be irretrievable ruin, had shot himself.

The son of the once great London merchant found himself professionless, untrained for any work suitable to his refined tastes, a poor man! As a boy he had been brought up amidst luxurious surroundings. He had ever been a dutiful son to his parents, but no work had ever been expected of him, and his frank, genial nature had won him many friends. Nevertheless, he was not the sort of man to ask assistance of the latter. Nothing lay open to him save emigration; and, but for his mother, who merely retained a paltry sum of eight hundred pounds, and whom he felt bound—although he knew not how—to support, he would have taken this step, shipped to Australia, and sought a living there.

But a week after his father's death, that mother whom he loved so well lay on her death-bed. After bidding him fight his way in the world, never despairing, never fainting by the way, but always looking forward to the goal of success, she smiled up at him through her tears. He imprinted a long kiss upon the already chill forehead, and her gentle spirit passed away from its earthly tenement. The third bolt had struck him.

He fell upon his knees beside the bed, in mute agony. He was alone in very truth now.

After seeing her laid to rest in a laurel-covered grave, in the churchyard at Brocklau, the country seat which once he expected to inherit, he realised his effects—bringing him in a sum of between eight and nine hundred pounds—and booked a passage to Australia, the country where gold and sunshine were reported to be equally plentiful; and a few weeks later he sailed in a crowded ship.

* * * * *

Harry Sanderson arrived in Melbourne after an uneventful voyage. For a fortnight he knocked about the then rising township, undecided as to where to proceed. The gold boom was at its height, and upon falling in with an old miner who had made his "pile," he soon decided upon his course of action. From this man he purchased a complete turn-out, consisting of a cart, a couple of horses, tents, tools, cooking utensils, and all that comprises a miner's swag, at a very low price—in addition to a considerable quantity of excellent advice, which the good-natured miner threw in—and started upon his tedious journey, along the rough, beaten track, to the goldfields.

The first night he camped at a creek, where he saw two tents had already been erected. He was surprised, later, to see that they were occupied by a man and a little girl, apparently father and daughter. He saw the pair casting glances of envy upon his comfortable turn-out, and noted how hungrily their eyes wandered towards the fire that he had kindled, whereon he was grilling a steak, the aroma from which was borne in their direction upon the warm evening air. Partly out of compassion, and partly from a sense of loneliness, he stepped forward and asked them to join him in his meal.

They readily accepted the invitation. After the viands had been discussed, the stranger acquainted Harry Sanderson with the last chapter of his life. He was in very low water, he said, at the present time; he was a well-connected man, and had been in a large way of business in Sydney, when a ship in which he had placed the bulk of his capital, went down; and his creditors, pouncing down upon him, had turned him out with but a few shillings in his possession. His wife was dead, and he had not a friend in the world with

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whom he could leave his child, consequently he was forced to take the little one with him. They had walked from Melbourne, his last coin going in passage money from Sydney, and they had to subsequently depend for food upon the generosity of the travellers they met.

Harry Sanderson never doubted the plausibility of this story; but sat, with his legs crossed, puffing the smoke from his briarwood pipe, listening with the deepest attention. The man, whose name was Wilson, had certainly interested him not a little by the recital of his troubles, but the girl—whose age could not have been more than twelve years—with her sunburnt, pretty face, surrounded by a wealth of clustering curls, and her large, blue, beautiful eyes, and red, parted lips, revealing a row of little teeth, most regular and of pearly whiteness, attracted him in some subtle manner which he could not explain satisfactorily even to himself.

At the conclusion of her father's story she spoke out, without a trace of nervousness, and also without a trace of affectation.

"You see, sir," said she, "father is not very strong; and, as I am strong and able, I came with him, in order to help him and look after him. I know, because I am only a girl, I shall be laughed at up at the diggings," she shook her curls, and her eyes danced as she went on, "but I don't care, I'm going to stick to my father."

"You're a very plucky little girl," said Sanderson. But his heart grew cold at the thought of all the evil that this sweet, innocent child would see and hear at the goldfields. She was far too pure and sweet a flower to blossom in such a devilish atmosphere.

She looked up into Sanderson's face in such an appealing manner that his heart went out to her on the spot, and he determined to watch over her with a brother's care.

"You — you will look after my father, *sometimes?*" she asked. "You are well and strong, and I can see by your face that you are kind."

Something suspiciously like a tear shone in either eye, as, nodding to the child, Sanderson turned to her father. "Mr. Wilson, I can sympathise with you; I too have gone through some trouble, but—as regards money—I am not quite so badly off as you are, and if you'll just allow me to offer you and your daughter a lift and food for the remainder of your journey, I shall be delighted," he said, in his genial way.

David Wilson protested in a half-hearted manner, but consented eventually, as he said, for his daughter's sake. He sprang to his feet and striking his fist upon the stump of a felled tree, he swore that one day he would repay the kindness of the "new chum."

But Sanderson considered himself amply repaid by the company of the child. Her bright eyes were ever shining, her light laugh was ever rippling, and her merry tongue was ever going; so that the journey to the diggings was no longer a jolting drive over a rough, scarce discernable track, but was as a pleasure party, too soon to be broken up, in the estimation of Harry Sanderson.

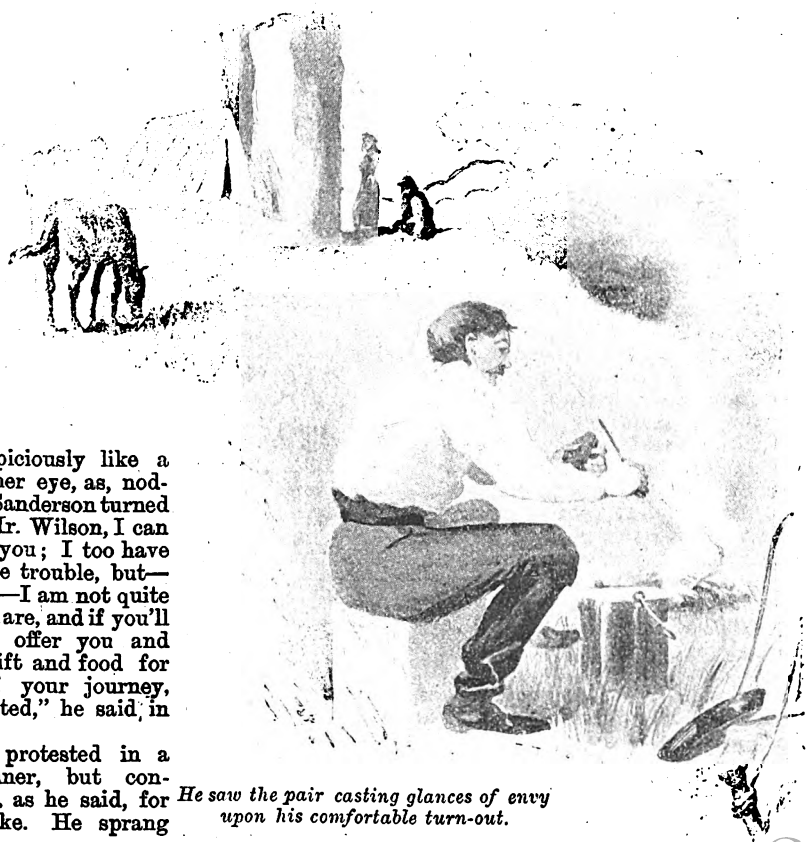
Whilst journeying, Wilson told his companion that he had had considerable experience in gold mining, and to equalise matters and show some return, he suggested that they should enter into partnership, a suggestion that was readily agreed to by Sanderson, and on their arrival at Chamber's Flat, their destination, they pegged out adjoining claims, and erected their tents side by side.

* * * * *

For two years they worked their claims with varying results, but they never found the rich reefs for which they so sanguinely hoped. So by Wilson's advice it was resolved that they should strike their tents and travel farther, and for yet another two years they worked with the same results, in different fields. Then they took to prospecting and exploring a thick belt of country, and eventually discovered the gully, now known as Wilson's Gully.

There was much jubilation at this long awaited turn of affairs. Eva, Wilson's daughter, now grown to womanhood, was especially delighted and enthusiastic, and Harry Sanderson gazed with a vague, indescribable longing upon her beautiful, radiant face; but somehow he dared not look into those great blue eyes, for fear that he might not read the answer which he longed for in them.

Gold! Gold! Gold! They had found it in quantities at last. But the feverish desire for gold, for the gold's sake, no longer held possession of Harry Sanderson. It was solely in the hope of winning this daughter of the Australian plains, this flower of the wild, uncultivated country, that he now longed for the possession of golden nuggets.



He saw the pair casting glances of envy upon his comfortable turn-out.

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Leaving his partner in charge of their valuable discoveries, Wilson rode to the nearest township to register his claim and obtain the necessary papers from the warden of the goldfields.

Gold! Gold! Gold! The word seemed to ring out bravely to each step of his cantering horse. Untold gold was in his possession now. All that was needed was work to dig it up. And would he not labour to increase, and ever increase, the wealth that awaited the handling? Gold! Gold! Gold! His brain reeled at the thought. The fever, the terrible thirst for gold, had always been upon him, sapping almost every drop of his better nature; but now his avarice governed him, drove him, held him in a fearful grip that there was no fleeing from. Before, he had possessed *some* mastery over himself, over this lust of gold; but now his power had gone. He was like a puppet in the hands of this terrible greed; his conscience lay in a death-like slumber, he could no longer attempt to struggle against this overwhelming desire for gold, gold, gold.

Great beads of sweat broke out upon his brow as he cantered onwards. Something impelled him to commit a crime for the sake of this gold. He gazed this way and that with hunted, terror-stricken eyes when he drew rein and sought the warden's office.

Instead of taking out the papers in the joint names of himself and Sanderson, as he had agreed to do, he took them out and registered the claim under his own name alone.

It was accomplished. He had committed the crime—and he was safe.

The terror died out of his eyes; his hand scarcely trembled as he thrust the papers into his belt.

He swung himself into the saddle. He could hardly restrain a guffaw of triumph, ere he dug his heavy spurs into his animal's flanks. He started off at a gallop, and raising his long, unkempt beard with one hand, he held before his mouth and laughed into it, loud and long.

Gold! Gold! Gold! Ha, ha! He had got it, got it all now, and the young English swell had no title to the smallest nugget. It was his, *his, his!* Wilson's Gully, only Wilson's!

Sanderson—honest as the broad light of day himself, never suspected treachery in another, and did not ask to see the papers, being fully contented that he was half owner of what was likely to prove a rich mine.

* * * * *

The news of the find soon spread, and a week later a rush had set in, the surrounding country was eagerly pegged out; and, as several other rich claims had been discovered, a township was formed in the gully, and the usual traces of population became apparent.

As some machinery was required to work the mine, Wilson suggested that Sanderson should purchase it with the remainder of his capital. The latter readily consented—it was such a sound investment—and spent the whole of his money in plant and in getting the mine into a fit condition to work it on a large scale.

One night—the machinery being ready, and every prospect of the mine turning out a rich property being assured—Wilson returned from the grog store, which had already found its way into the township, in a semi-drunken condition. His daughter had not prepared his supper, not knowing how late he might be. With an oath he raised his hand as though to strike her. She looked at her father with her large, troubled eyes, and shrank back in fear. In an instant, Harry Sanderson, who was present, sprang to his feet and seized Wilson by the wrist in a vice-like grip.

It was accomplished. He had committed the crime.

"You coward!" he shouted.

"Coward, eh? You dare to call me a coward?" sneered Wilson. "Leave my claim. Leave the gully at once. Go, you upstart, go! Do you hear me? Edge out of it. Do you think that I am going to keep you here always?"

Eva gazed at him in astonishment, her lips parted, her hand pressed tightly to her bosom. "Mr. Sanderson! oh, what does he mean?" she panted.

"He has been drinking," Harry Sanderson made answer reassuringly.

Then he turned to Wilson and looked him full in the face. "You forget that half the claim is mine," he said coolly, "and that I paid for the whole of the machinery."

"You lie!" roared Wilson. "You lie, you dog!"

He strode across the hut and unlocked a small trunk in the corner. Snatching up the copy of the register he thrust it into the astonished young man's hands. "Read that! read it! you scoundrel!" he shouted.

Sanderson took it and held it in the flickering lamplight. He read it incredulously. But as he read, the truth dawned upon him. This man had broken faith with him, had lied, had rendered contemptible the name of friend, had returned evil—the blackest, foulest treachery—for good, had robbed him of his share in the claim. His lower jaw fell, he paled to the lips, his eyes filled with wonder and reproach.

"And I was your *friend!*" he said slowly.

"I don't require your friendship," Wilson retorted.

"No. You no longer need it. You have bartered it away." He looked dazedly at Eva, standing trembling, scarce believing the evidence of her own eyes and ears; then he turned to the half-drunken man before him. "But what a price to sell it for," he said bitterly.

Then he moved towards Eva, took the tips of her

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fingers in his strong hand, raised them to his lips, and, turning, strode through the door of the hut, without uttering another word.

He dived into the forest and, coming to a fallen tree, sat down upon the trunk and strove to collect his thoughts, to reason it all out mentally; but his mind seemed to have become a blank, his very memory seemed to have dimmed. So he sat in the dusk, looking vacantly before him, like one who has received a terrific blow upon the temples, stunned, helpless, a mere cypher.

A little later a white figure crossed his line of sight. It was Eva. She was looking for him.

Then the whole truth broke in upon his brain. He had lost his claim; and in losing that, he had lost all hopes of winning her.

He started when he perceived the deathly whiteness of her face as she drew near.

"Mr. Sanderson," she faltered. She essayed to speak further, but a great sob choked her utterance; she dropped her face in her hands and burst into tears.

"Eva, don't cry like that! It makes it all the harder for me to bear." He sprang to his feet and took her by the hand. "I will go away. I will go away. I will not dispute his claim." And, with fast beating heart, he strove to look into the face of the woman he loved better than a world of gold.

"You—you must not go—go—away," she said between her sobs.

"Why should I stay? I am a poor man, poorer than when I first knew you," he retorted in a voice of pain.

"Harry!" she said reproachfully.

He tilted up her chin and looked into her crimsoning face. "Eva, my darling, my love, my life, tell me to stay and ——"

"Stay, Harry," she whispered.

And then the love that had lain smouldering for over five years burst forth at the first sign of trouble, and in the silence of the woods the words were spoken which bound them together for ever, for theirs was the love of a life-time and of eternity.

Later, Sanderson returned again to the mine, and to the hut he helped to build.

Wilson met him, armed with a revolver.

"Are you going to clear out?" he asked, as he fingered the weapon with studied carelessness.

Sanderson looked at him fearlessly. "Yes," he replied, "I'll take my few belongings with me, and go. Since you are the owner of the mine, according to law, I shall not dispute it."

His tones showed neither hatred nor malice. They cut Wilson to the quick and lashed him to fury. He had expected his partner to threaten him or to offer fight, but this reply was quite unlooked for on his part.

He scarcely realised that his daughter—because she was his daughter—had unwittingly saved him from the soundest thrashing a man could have administered to him.

He glared at the man he had wronged. "And another thing, Sanderson, I don't wish your acquaintance with my daughter to continue. You understand what I mean," he said fiercely.

Sanderson made no answer. He gathered together his few belongings and set off for the town in the gully.

Eva watched him departing. Then she turned to her father.

"Have you no conscience? no spark of honour?" she asked in a tone of restrained pain. "How could you be so wicked? He kept us alive—yes, kept us from starvation!—for years. He trusted you, and you have betrayed the trust. Have you no heart at all?"

He strode towards her, an oath upon his lips.

She made no movement, but still faced him, white to the lips, her eyes condemning him.

"To think—only to think—that you are my father—that my father is worse, infinitely worse, than a common thief; for he has taken the part of Judas Iscariot, has betrayed the man who befriended him," she said in bitter irony.

Her words goaded him to fury. "If ever you mention that fellow again in my house, I'll strangle you!" he shouted. "He has put all those —— superfine ideas in your head. Damn him! I say, and damn him! and damn him!"

"He has taught me all I know. He has taught me to look upon all meanness and lying and theft with contempt," she answered.

"And I will teach you that I am master of my own," he shouted brutally, and in another instant his hand was upraised—it fell upon her pale cheek with terrific force!

A woman's scream rent the night air. Eva Wilson lay prone, unconscious, upon the floor of the hut.

A moment later, her father, struck by remorse and terror at what he had done in his ungovernable fury, knelt beside her, calling upon her name.

* * * * *

The surprise in the township was intense, when it became known that young Sanderson, instead of being a partner in the Wilson Hill mine, had only been engaged as a workman; and there was plenty of rough sympathy forthcoming, for Sanderson was popular in his own quiet way. Wilson ridiculed the idea of Sanderson being a partner, and the latter said not a word upon the subject either way. He would have liked to bid the place farewell as he did England when misfortune befel him there, but he had promised Eva that he would stay, and on that account he took a position as assistant in O'Calligan's store.

* * * * *

That hushed stillness so characteristic of the Australian bush was just setting in the fierce, red sun was disappearing, like a ball of fire, below the horizon. It cast its magenta rays upon Wilson's Gully, lighting up the rudely-built houses and huts, the scores of white tents scattered about, and the surrounding forest-covered, rugged hills, into a red, glowing hell.

The township, although far from large in comparison with towns of to-day, had grown considerably since Wilson founded it a year ago. It had come to be considered an important place, both by reason of its gold and its bloodshed, and its gangs of desperadoes.

As was customary, towards evening Wilson's Gully became a species of earthly pandemonium. The drinking shanties and gambling hells were crowded by men of all nations and classes, which, taken as a body, were as debased a set as ever could be found in a township of the size. Scarcely a night passed without some drunken brawl, in which blood was shed, taking place; for law and justice did not yet prevail.

A young man dressed in rough, bush garb, might have been seen hastily leaving a large building, which bore the roughly-painted sign: "J. O'Calligan, Storekeeper." He slammed the door behind him and hurried along the uneven, badly constructed street, until he passed beyond the knot of human habitations.

He directed his steps towards a house of better build than those in the town. It was situated beside Wilson's Hill Mine, on the shoulder of the hill, and surrounded by a dense belt of trees. As he drew near, he left the

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road leading to the house, and plunging into the forest, made his way to a fallen tree, where he halted.

That he was expecting some one was apparent by the eager way in which he scanned a zigzag bridle-path leading from the house.

The man was Harry Sanderson. He had been employed at O'Calligan's store for the past twelve months. He was waiting for Eva Wilson. Her father's mine had even exceeded his expectations, and he was now a wealthy man. He had obtained, and was still obtaining, that gold for which he had sacrificed all honour. He was now looked up to as being the leading man in the township, and his word was law. The hatred which a man invariably displays towards one whom he has wronged burnt like a furnace in his breast towards Harry Sanderson; and he left no stone unturned to throw the cloak of infamy about the shoulders of the latter. Thus it was that his daughter was forced to meet her lover clandestinely, if she met him at all.

The silver rays of the moon shot, spirit-like, upon the tall trees, the network of undergrowth, and the dead twigs upon the ground; and a faint breeze causing the leaves overhead to undulate in ghostly silence, gave the forest the appearance of a moving, glittering panorama, not of the earth, earthly. It was as though Sanderson had stepped out of a red and glowing hell into a pale, trembling one.

The kangaroos hopped by, opossums capered amidst the overhanging branches, the squirrels darted across his very feet, all eyeing him without a trace of fear. They had learned to know him. For this spot, night after night, had been the lover's trysting place, for months past. Here had they vowed their vows of mutual faith and patience and endurance. Here had they met with smiles, and parted in sorrow, not devoid of hope—that parting which is such sweet pain.

Suddenly Sanderson's eyes lighted. He stepped forward with outstretched hands. He saw her coming down the bridle-path, clad in white, her great, blue eyes aglow, a faint flush about her face, rising no higher than the lashes of her eyes, her lovely hair touched with palest gold. She seemed like some beauteous forest sprite, a fairy of the tree-belted hillside.

He took her hands in his, and drew her to him, kissing her red, tempting lips with a certain desperate tenderness, as though he feared that he might never so kiss her again.

Then they sat, side by side, hand clasping hand, upon the fallen tree trunk, and she whispered to him of her fears, of how her father had sworn to ruin him, beyond the ruin which he had already wrought him; had even sworn to bring about his death.

And he reassured her, allaying the dread, the horrible haunting fear for his safety, that ever nestled, snake-like, in her bosom. He told her of how he progressed at O'Calligan's store, of how the old man spoke of taking him into partnership now that he—O'Calligan—was growing old and feeble.

But when he had ceased speaking the old dread, the haunting fear, came back and gripped her with a strength that there was no resisting. And she told him of the terror and revulsion with which Johnson, the nephew of O'Calligan, inspired her

"Why should you fear him, dearest?" he asked, running his fingers through her locks of wavy hair. "Why should you fear him?"

"It is for your safety that I fear," she answered.

"Pshaw! I am not afraid of him. He is certainly a loose, dissipated scoundrel, who would not stick at anything; but *I* am stronger than he is, so he could not injure me much, bodily; and O'Calligan has helped him monetarily so often to no purpose, that he has now refused to do so again, and this afternoon he ordered him out of the store—I must say I did not much like the look on Johnson's face, as he shuffled out, it was fiendish; but *I* am thought well of by O'Calligan, so Johnson could not injure me much in my business."

And thus he once again allayed her fears.

A little later a red, glowing spot shone from the township through the trees.

"It is a bush fire," said Eva.

Sanderson scanned it curiously for a minute or two, and then turned to his companion.

"It is a fire in the township," he said, "in the direction of O'Calligan's store. See how the sky is lighting up. God! it is the store!"

One clasp of her hand, one hurried embrace, and he was dashing through the forest to the scene of the conflagration.

He had judged rightly. The flames were bursting from the store.

The building was of wood, as dry as tinder, and the contents were of a light, inflammable nature. The tongues of fire burst through the chinks and windows, they lapped the roof with hunger and ravening, they twined about the chimney stack, they leapt upwards towards the sky. It was a lurid spectacle. The valley was lit up from end to end, and the rough faces in the

"It is the store!"

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quickly gathering crowd of miners shone red; they looked like an assembly of fiends.

"Is O'Calligan inside?" that was the question which Harry Sanderson kept mentally asking, as he rushed upon the scene.

He made at top speed for the back entrance, and despite the ferocity of the fire, shook the door again and again, flung himself against it, strove to kick it in, and——

A terrible blow from a pistol butt laid him low. He dropped like a log.

Johnson, for he it was who brought Sanderson down, senseless, dragged him away from the doomed store.

A horrible grin played about his repulsive features.

"Here he is, lads!" he shouted. "Here is the murderer! Here is the dog, who burnt his master to death in his bed! I collared him. He was clearing away through the back door; he had a lighted firebrand in his hand."

A hoarse murmur from the crowd greeted this intelligence. A murmur that grew in force until it broke into a roar of excitement.

They pressed round O'Calligan's prostrate assistant. They bound him hands and feet, and set a guard over him, for the remainder of the night.

Such an occurrence was meat and drink to their vitiated, brutal tastes.

In the meantime, the store was reduced to a heap of smouldering ashes.

* * * * *

The sun broke away from his concealment behind the hills, to light up an animated scene the next morning. All was bustle and excitement, an event was about to happen that always proved highly interesting to the more too refined miners. A man was to be tried for his life. Rough and ready were the trials in those days; if the public judged the prisoner guilty he was strung up to the nearest tree in the course of the next few minutes. It was camp law.

All the town came and gazed on Sanderson, who, recovered from his blow, stood bound to a massive tree trunk, facing the scene of the over-night fire, and each made an audible remark concerning his appearance, passing on to a shanty, or joining one of the many groups of miners, who were eagerly discussing the situation. Everyone intended making a day of it. Bets and wagers were made freely upon the result of the trial.

A stout man with bloodshot eyes and a blotched countenance stood not twenty yards from the prisoner. He was betting upon the event.

"Three to one! Three to one! I'll lay three to one it's a hanging job!" he was shouting, as he thumped his fist upon an upturned tub.

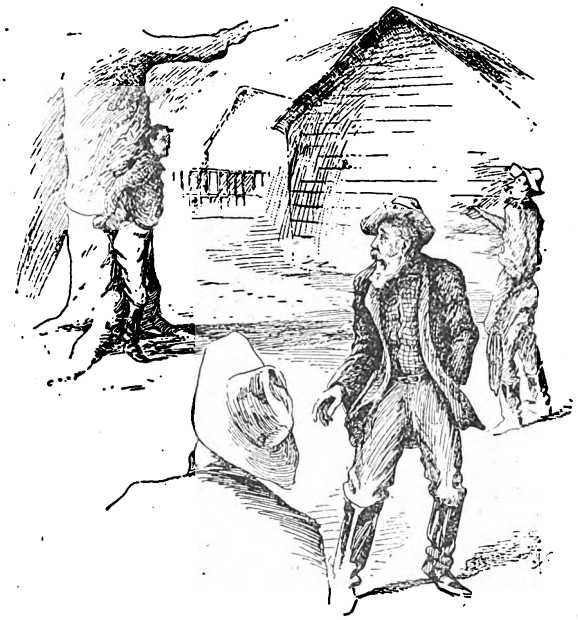
"Take fives," said another; and the bet was booked.

Wilson, who—as leading man in the township—was to act as judge, and also to conduct the prosecution (an honourable and just method of putting a man upon trial), had been early astir, and had had frequent interviews with Johnson, the principal witness.

A gang of miners had searched the *débris* of the store, and had discovered a few charred bones, which were handed over to Wilson.

The trial was held in the main street in order that the proceedings might be as public as possible. A rough stage had been erected, upon one end of which stood a box—the dock; and the centre was reserved for witnesses, the other end being occupied by Wilson. A bell attached to the roof of a shanty rang out an intimation that the proceedings were about to commence.

Wilson, looking grave, upright, one who keenly felt the responsibility of his position, gave the order "Bring forward the prisoner," and Harry Sanderson looking



Came and gazed on Sanderson.

pale and troubled, yet with an expression of determination upon his face, was led to the stage and placed in the rudely carpentered box.

His arrival was greeted by cheers, groans, and blasphemous oaths, and the wagering started in right earnest.

After a time, Wilson succeeded in restoring something approaching order, and he read out the charge of incendiarism and murder. "How do you plead, guilty, or not guilty?"

The prisoner raised his fearless grey eyes, and looked at Wilson. The crowd became still as death, breathlessly listening.

"Not guilty," came the confident reply, followed by a burst of cheers and counter cheers.

"Where were you last night when the fire broke out?" asked Wilson, when order was restored.

"I refuse to answer," the prisoner said.

"I'll bet ten to one he swings," roared a big digger.

"Done, I'll take it, for all you're worth," said another. The prisoner looked towards the man and smiled his thanks. He knew that the judgment of the public depended a good deal upon the drift of the betting.

Wilson waited for the amount of the wager to be settled, then he called the first witness, Johnson.

The appearance of this man upon the platform was greeted by his friends with loud cheering and considerable banter.

Never was more open enthusiasm at a Spanish bullfight. They had their human bull in the arena, the matador was there, they merely wished to see him goaded and gored to madness before they held their thumbs down for the signal of death.

Johnson began his story:

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"Jim O'Calligan was my uncle," said he. "We had, as the whole township knows, an occasional row; but we were fond of each other."

"Did you quarrel with him yesterday?" asked Wilson.

"No, we were very friendly. I went into the store and found the prisoner and my uncle having a row, and I told the prisoner not to try and bully an old man. I stopped the row."

"You lie, Johnson," said the prisoner.

The crowd crushed eagerly forward.

"What happened then?"

"I asked the prisoner what he was carrying on about. He said that O'Calligan had refused to give him his wages."

"Another lie," said Sanderson.

"Did you hear him make any threats?" Wilson made the leading question.

"He said that he had a good mind to roast the old Jew alive."

"You lying scoundrel," shouted Sanderson as he strove to free himself.

The crowd shouted in excitement.

Johnson cast a sneering glance at the prisoner, during the interruption; and taking a piece of hard tobacco from his pocket, bit off a piece, and commenced to chew it nonchalantly.

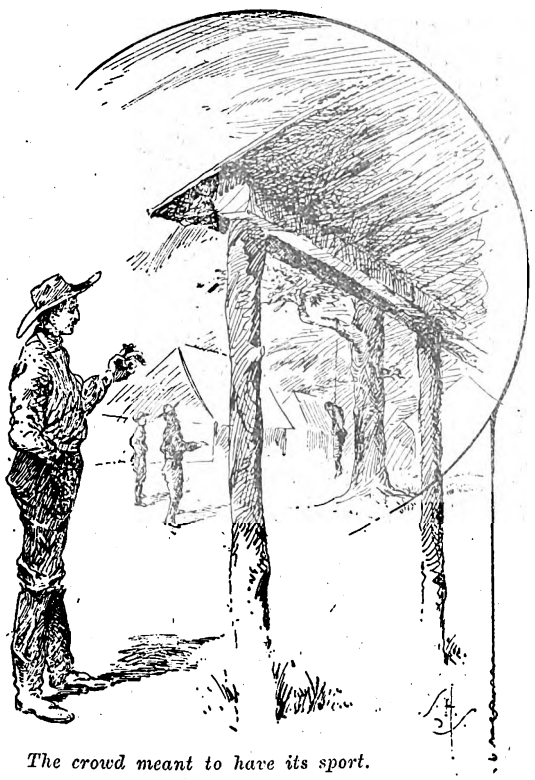
When silence was restored, Wilson continued his examination of the witness.

"Did you see him come out of the burning store?"

"Yes. He rushed out with his clothes singed as you see them; he had a lighted brand in his hand."

"Another villainous lie," said the prisoner. His face was white as death, when the crowd turned towards him, and shook clenched fists, and hooted in his face.

He knew that his life was worth but little more than a minute's purchase.



The crowd meant to have its sport.

"What have you to say to that, prisoner?" Wilson asked when order was restored. "The witness says that he caught you red-handed."

"I say it is a lie. I was trying to break open the door, to enter; for I feared O'Calligan was in the building. That is how my clothes became singed. Suddenly I felt a heavy blow on the head. I knew nothing after that, until I came to, to find myself bound with these." He held his corded wrists up as he spoke. Great beads of sweet stood upon his brow. He turned to the assembled throng, looking for one glance of belief in the eyes of only one; but Johnson's words had taken effect.

Not one friendly look was cast upon him.

"To the tree! To the tree! Give him the murderer's dancing ground!" they shouted.

"Stop!" It was a woman's voice, shrill, terror-stricken, but commanding, that rang out through the clamour.

In another instant, Eva Wilson, pushing her way through the miners, clambered on to the platform.

"Stop!" she cried again, throwing back her pale, beautiful face, and raising her slender hand, in the grandeur of terror, of fear for the life of the man whom she loved.

Surprised into silence the crowd watched her.

"Stand down," said her father sternly.

She threw him a look of defiance. "Not until the prisoner, Harry Sanderson, stands down also," she said in clear tones.

The miners, coarse, low, brutal, as many of them were, nevertheless had their ideas of fair play. They cheered themselves hoarse, as the girlish form stood there, in the full light of the sun, upon that raised platform, ready to defend, it might be to lay down her life for the life of her sweetheart. She looked like a beautiful tigress deprived of her whelps, a woman whose child was at the mercy of one more powerful than herself, but yet one whom she defied. In a frenzy of excitement the miners demanded that she should be heard; and Wilson had no course open to him, save that of submitting.

Then, amidst utter silence, she spoke again.

"Harry Sanderson was in my presence in the forest, close to our house, father, when the fire broke out; and we had been together for more than two hours. When he saw the fire, Harry Sanderson ran to the store to try and save his master and his master's goods. More, he told me only a few minutes before that that man"—she pointed one taper finger at Johnson—"had been turned out of the store that afternoon by his uncle!"

A volley of cheers greeted her. She stepped towards the prisoner and laid one hand upon his shoulder. They should defy this bearer of false witness together.

"What do you say to that, Johnson?" Wilson asked.

"I say it is a lie," said the witness, shifting uneasily.

"And I endorse that, Johnson," Wilson said, "for the girl is my daughter, and she was in my house all the evening."

"You lie, sir," the prisoner said firmly, "I was with your daughter. We have been in the habit of meeting ever since you robbed me of my share in the mine."

"Two and two," shouted the crowd excitedly. "More evidence," came a voice from a neighbouring window.

Wilson tugged at his beard. "They are lovers," he said, "and will naturally swear to the same lie. But we have more evidence. We have these charred bones to prove the death of O'Calligan. We know that the prisoner has lied, for he says that I have robbed him of

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a share in my mine. The property always was mine. I have the copy of the register here. Who likes may read it."

"The bones, are they a proof?" The voice of Eva broke upon their ears again.

"Decidedly. It shows that the prisoner is not only an incendiary, but also a murderer," her father replied.

"How do you know that they are Jim O'Calligan's bones? How do you know that they are human bones at all?"

"What other bones could they be?" Wilson asked, shrugging his shoulders, as though to prolong the argument was waste of time.

"Ham bones or bacon bones, they might easily have been," she replied. "Hams were sold at the store."

"These bones were all lying together. I found them myself, lying as though O'Calligan had fallen, stifled, in a heap."

A groan ran through the crowd. Once again they cast menacing glances at the prisoner.

"If that is so—" Eva began.

"Encugh, the evidence is damning. I pronounce—"

"Stop!" she shrieked, holding up her hand.

"If these bones are the bones of O'Calligan, how is it his skull is not there? It would be curious if the skull was completely burned, and the bones, bits of them, remained."

Once more the crowd wavered, and greeted her with cheers.

"Let someone search until he finds the skull. If that"— she pointed to the heap of burnt bones—"is what remains of O'Calligan, the skull will be in the spot on which you found those bones. If the skull is not there, then set the prisoner free."

Then she turned about and faced the crowd. "Gentlemen," she said, in spite of the president's evident desire to prove the prisoner guilty, "I ask you, as lovers of fair play, to order the court to be adjourned until the missing skull is found."

"An adjournment! An adjournment!" the crowd yelled with one voice, and Wilson had no alternative save that of obeying the will of the men gathered round about him.

Several miners instantly went in quest of the missing skull, but no trace of it did they find in the ash-covered *débris*.

Suddenly the prisoner lifted up his bowed head. The shout: "Stand aside! Gangway! Gangway!" fell upon his ear. Had they found the skull? So much depended on that skull. He shook like a leaf in his terrible excitement.

It was a horseman who picked his way through the onlookers. It was old Jim O'Calligan in the flesh.

"Lads," he shouted heartily. "I've been over to Warmgardie; I made up my mind to go directly Harry Sanderson left the store. I've got a deed of partnership for him to sign, in my pocket. Harry Sanderson left the store *before* me. Understand? He is as innocent as I am. He is one of the finest fellows I have ever met. But if you want to know who *threatened* to fire the store and fizzle my bones—it was *that* man!"

He pointed one accusing finger at Johnson, and looked him squarely in the face.

The crowd meant to have its anticipated sport, and without consulting Wilson, or waiting for further developments, they sprang upon the wretched man, Johnson, and dragged him to the tree. In less than five minutes his body swung in the air, riddled with bullets.

Wilson spread out his arms. His features contorted. He fell forward upon his face, in a fit of epilepsy.

When he came to his senses again, he stretched out his hand to Sanderson, who had been liberated, and begged his forgiveness.

Harry Sanderson gripped the hand and wrung it heartily.

"If it hadn't been for the delay you procured," he later whispered to Eva, "I should——"

She laughed and cried as she looked at him.

"You—you are safe now, darling," she whispered.

"Yes, saved by a modern Portia," he retorted, kissing away her tears.

W. Keppel Honnywill.

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Editorial Mind.

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HOW THE MAN IN LIVERY WON AN HEIRESS.

Translated from the French of Mme. Care.

I was Eliane du Rocher's guardian. At the age of eight she had lost both her parents. Her health was delicate, and I thought the best thing to do for her was to put her to a convent school in the country.

I myself had three sons. Eliane, when of age, would come into possession of £50, and, as I did not want to be accused of paternal covetousness, I desisted from taking her to my home. Consequently she spent all her vacations at school, grew up beautiful, and thereby caused me to redouble my precautions.

She showed religious proclivities, and professed a vocation for convent life. I remonstrated against her becoming a nun, but she urged that she was happy, and wanted nothing better than to pass her existence at the convent. When of age, she for two years devoted her whole income to feeding and clothing the poor of Juilly.

One morning, however, I received the following astonishing letter:

My dear Guardian,—I am bored. After mature reflection, I find that I am not cut out for a religious career. Kindly find me a husband as soon as possible. Your grateful and devoted Eliane.

I hurried to the convent. "So you are bored?"

"To death, my dear guardian."

"And you wish to marry simply for lack of something better to do?"

"Exactly."

"Have you considered?"

"Not very much—only enough to know that since I am bored at the convent, I can have no religious vocation. I won't be an old maid. There is nothing left then, except marriage—or death."

"How you jump at conclusions!"

"Have you, in your infinite wisdom, anything else to suggest?"

"Hum! And what do you require for the happy mortal, your future husband?"

"Nothing—except that he pleases me."

"Very well. But what does please you? You must have some ideal—all girls have."

"Not I," she answered quietly. "Remember, my kind friend, that I know only three men; you, our father confessor, and the convent gardener, and——"

"And?"

She slightly tossed her head.

"Well, they are not at all what I want."

I was fully aware that I, stout, bald, and near-sighted, could not be the fancy of a handsome girl of twenty, still, I felt a little provoked at being told it so plainly.

"Very well," I said, rather gruffly.

She kissed me. Probably she would have been more circumspect had I been her ideal; anyhow, her kiss calmed me.

"I shall seek and find."

She dropped me a nice little courtesy, and we parted.

It does not seem hard to find a candidate for the hand of a young and charming heiress. I presented quite a number of men to her—nice fellows, too; but none suited her. Summer was passing, and each week Eliane sent me a card with the words: "I am bored."

"Don't be so hard to please, then; make a choice," I answered, in exasperation.

Things were at this point, when my old friend, the curate of Redon, spoke to me of the Marquise de Pen-Valloët and her two sons. Old family, distinguished name, good connections, respectable fortune. I proposed to Eliane to spend a few weeks with my wife at Trouville, and she joyfully accepted.

"On the way," said I, "we will stop at one of my clients, the Marquise de Pen-Valloët."

"I wager your client has a son."

"Two, in fact."

"So much the easier to choose."

The Marquise resided on a large estate some miles from Redon. I had been told of her strictly economical way of living, so I was not surprised to find awaiting us at the station an old rattletrap of a carriage, which smelt so musty that, as we started to get in, Eliane recoiled.

"Suppose we ride outside; I should enjoy the fresh air."

"I don't see any ladder," said I, dismayed at the steep climb.

"Bah! one foot on the wheel, another near the coachman, and there you are."

"You want to break my neck."

"Don't be afraid, sir," said the coachman, offering me his strong hand, and helping me to mount quite easily.

"Evidently an ex-soldier," thought I, looking admiringly at the robust, handsome figure of the man.

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Eliane seemed no more than a feather in his strong grasp. Before I was seated she was beside me, radiant and happy as a lark.

"You will be afraid," said I, measuring the distance from our perch to the ground.

"Afraid! You don't know me. You will cry quarter before I do. Now, driver, quick, quick!"

The man smiled rather sarcastically, I thought.

"Not too fast, my boy," I said. "Don't listen to that featherbrain."

He gathered up his reins and started his team. Heavens, what a race! My blood curdles at the thought of it. Eliane clapped her hands and incited the pleased coachman to redoubled efforts. I held on with might and main, prepared to jump at the expected crash.

My torture lasted thirty-five minutes, during which I must have grown ten years older. The carriage turned sharply to the right, we raced up a narrow road, and stopped short in a paved court. The precision with which the ponies halted at the door would have done honour to circus-horses, but I was too vexed to admire.

"You came near killing us," I said to the coachman.

"Everyone knows his own business, sir; I know mine," he answered phlegmatically.

A handsome, refined-looking young man of medium height met us and assisted us to alight.

Mme. de Pen-Valloët received us in the large, gloomy drawing-room, hung with ancestral pictures more or less hideous. She herself, in her old-fashioned, faded gown, looked like an old family portrait descended from its frame. She greeted us graciously, and herself led us to our apartments.

"My son, René," she said, designating the handsome young man who had first received us, "has awaited your coming with great impatience, the curate's description of you and Mlle. Eliane was so flattering. And then we lead such a retired life, have few calls, fewer neighbours, only some friends of my own age. Your visit is a perfect godsend, and I hope you will make it a long one."

I thought the old lady's severe grey eyes rested with pleasure on my little ward.

Dinner was ready. We had just time to change our travelling attire. When Eliane reappeared, in her simple white gown, she looked queenly beautiful. René met her at the door with some compliment which did not seem to displease her.

Covers were laid for five. We were only four, however, and the plate opposite our hostess remained vacant. Nobody seemed to notice it, and dinner was served.

The *cuisine* was good, the wines choice. The service might have been better. The little servant who waited on us seemed a novice at his task. He broke a plate, and his mistress gave him a severe look.

Just then another guest entered—a man of about thirty, tall and with a strong face. Saluting us, he took the empty place opposite Mme. de Pen-Valloët.

"My first son, Marquis Horace de Pen-Valloët," she said, presenting him, adding: "Late as usual."

"You know why, mother," he answered coldly.

I could not take my eyes off the new-comer. Where had I met him? His voice awoke some disagreeable memory, yet I could not place him.

The conversation became livelier. I understood that the Marquis had lived in India, and asked whether it was so.

"I have travelled a great deal," he answered laconically.

"Too much," added his mother.

"Are not the Eastern climates rather trying to Europeans?" I asked, not knowing exactly what to say.

He shook his head. "I never was better than when travelling. Only I spent my fortune—a thing my mother cannot forget."

"Your fortune and a part of mine," added the Marquise, rather bitterly.

We turned the conversation, and when dinner was over, I feared the long evening yet to come.

Mme. de Pen-Valloët proposed a game of bezique to me, while René sat down to the piano, and, with a pretty tenor voice, sang German and Breton songs.

At last came the time for retiring. I signalled to Eliane, who was in languid conversation with the elder Pen Valloët, while the younger was still warbling away.

"Well," said I, when we were alone.

She stifled a yawn. "Let us go to bed. I am tired to death."

"Not before you have told me your impression of the two candidates."

"The younger is handsome, he has a pretty voice, and dresses well. That is all I know so far"

"And the other?"

She laughed. "The other? Why, he hasn't a cent. He doesn't count as a match, guardie, dear."

"True. I always thought you were a sensible girl."

Next morning it was late when I awoke.

I had hardly finished my toilet before Eliane, fresh and bright as the morning, knocked for admittance.

"What! up already?"

"Already! Why, I have had a long walk through the dewy woods. It was exquisite."

"Alone?"

"Oh, no. I made sure of an escort last night."

"Ah! ha! So things are working?"

"Spendidly, my dear guardian. Open your ears. I have decided to marry——"

"Handsome René?" said I, rubbing my hands.

"No; I am going to marry—the coachman who drove so well yesterday As soon as I placed my hand in his, I knew he was a man a woman could trust. But here he is to tell you that you are not dreaming."

She opened the door, and Horace de Pen-Velloët entered.

"Myself!" he said, smiling at my astonishment. "My story is not long, but rather unusual. I wanted to be a soldier. My mother objected. I obeyed her, but the spirit of adventure possessed me. As soon as I was of age I started on a trip round the world. My mother told you I spent my fortune and part of hers. I dare say I committed my share of follies. When my means were exhausted I returned home. The fatted calf was not killed in my honour. On the contrary, I had to put up with reproaches, complaints and taunts. What was I to do? Incapable of earning my living, exasperated at hearing myself reproached for eating the bread of idleness, I offered to take the place of my mother's coachman, who had died. I loved horses—and you know I can drive."

"I still feel it," said I, shaking myself.

"When I offered my services to my mother I was half joking, but she accepted in earnest, so I became the coachman. I take care of my animals, and, when it is necessary, put on the livery. At night I resume my dress-suit, my title, and my rights, as eldest son. And this might have gone on for ever, but for the coming of this liberating fairy, my charming *fiancée*, who, I think, understands me, and will try to love me a little."

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THE GREAT MIDDLEWICK BANK ROBBERY

SUMMARY.

MR. BRYANT, *Manager of Middlewick Bank.*
HERBERT STEWART, *Cashier.*
FRANK RUTHERFORD, *Book-keeper.*
ALFRED TAYLOR, *Detective.*
JOHN WARREN, *Old Watchman.*
JACK BURTON, *New Watchman—a detective in disguise.*
MISS DENTON, *Bryant's niece, and in love with Rutherford.*

£20,000 is stolen from the Bank one night while John Warren is asleep. The only persons apparently aware of the key to the combination lock are Mr. Bryant and Mr. Stewart. Taylor is led to suspect Frank Rutherford of having obtained the key to the lock, and shadows him. It appears that an attempt is to be made on the strong room by three notorious burglars—Nash, King, and Birch—who know nothing about the previous robbery. Arrangements are made to capture them, and two constables—Bates and Morton—are to be placed in the building, while Taylor and Burton watch outside.

CHAPTER IX.

A Stiff Chase.

It would not do for Sam Birch to retain his present position. As explained, he was too far from the bank to give prompt notice of the approach of danger. Accordingly, waiting only a moment after the door had closed behind his confederates, he sauntered to the corner and took position within a few steps of the building. There, instead of assuming a fixed posture, he walked slowly past for a dozen paces, and then returned, beginning a regular tramp, which would give him the scope of vision he needed.

Burton was alert. Instead of following him immediately, he remained in the shadow of the doorway for fully five minutes. He wished to wait until matters were moving within the bank itself. Then he stepped out from his concealment and imitated the action of the other watcher.

At that late hour not another person was in sight. Before, however, Burton reached the corner, a pedestrian came at a pace from the opposite direction, his course taking him in front of the steps and past the sentinel. The latter coughed in the most natural manner in the world, while the stranger, with no thought of what was going on so near him, hurried by and vanished from sight.

Burton had not checked his own moderate pace, and was now within a short distance of where Birch was slowly walking to and fro. The criminal had his eye on him, and seeing that he would pass near him, he again coughed. There could be no mistake as to the meaning of the simple signal.

An advantage presented itself to Burton, who was moving in the same direction as the other and only a few steps behind him. It was evident to the new watchman that Sam Birch had no more suspicion regarding him than he had of the stranger who had just passed out of sight. Yielding to impulse, Burton paused in front of the steps, as though he had caught some suspicious sound.

Birch instantly stopped in his beat, looked round and came back to where Burton stood.

"What's the matter with you?" he gruffly asked.

"I wonder if there's anything wrong in there," was the innocent reply of Burton.

"Look here, young man, you had better move on. I've been hired to watch that bank, and I'll run you in if you hang about here. If you want to save your skin, hurry home and go to bed."

Birch advanced angrily, with hand outstretched to seize the throat of the innocent-looking person. Burton retreated a single step. Then his right fist shot out like lightning, landing with crashing force upon the jaw of the astounded criminal, who staggered backwards and would have fallen to the ground had he not collided with the lamp-post behind him.

His right fist shot out.

Burton's blood was up, and he had dashed forward intending to fell his man to the earth and then slip the handcuffs upon him, but he was checkmated by the unexpected course of the ruffian.

Without uttering the signal to his friends within the bank to apprise them of what was going on, and without the faintest attempt to resent the assault, he turned and sped up the street like a deer.

For the moment Burton was disconcerted, for he had not dreamed of any such display of cowardice. The next instant, however, he was after the fugitive with the fleetness of a greyhound.

Burton was as good at running as was his friend Taylor, and it need not be said that he did not let grass grow under his feet. Birch kept in

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the middle of the street, where the way was open and there was no danger of running into any obstructions. This suited the pursuer, who ran as if his own life was at stake. He steadily gained, and, if no unexpected obstacle interposed, was sure to overtake his man in a very little while.

Sam Birch had proved himself a coward, but even a coward will fight viciously when driven into a corner. At the first corner the fugitive darted to the right with undiminished speed. Had he caught sight of any shelter he would have whisked into it; but hardly a second was at his command in which to search for one, and he kept on. Thus, when Burton shot round the same corner, he saw his man running in front of him, with the interval between them sensibly diminished and fast diminishing.

It was at this juncture that the pursuer became aware that he was not the only one chasing the burglar. Some person was running after him, and was close behind. Burton concluded a stranger had joined in the pursuit on general principles and with no knowledge of what it all meant.

But the watchman had no time to give the matter any thought. His hands were full with the fellow in front. Middlewick, it will be remembered, was a small town, and the race had not lasted long when all parties were dashing through the outskirts. At the next corner Burton had approached so close to his man that the latter would not have dared to drop out of sight had an opening appeared before him. He had not a spare second at his disposal.

"Stop, or I'll fire! I know you, Sam Birch!"

The answer was startling. The panting fugitive turned like a flash and let fly with two chambers of his revolver straight at his pursuer, who was almost upon him. Burton instinctively ducked his head and the shots sped harmlessly past, though it is not to be supposed that this action caused his escape. The fugitive was too flurried and in too great a haste to secure a good aim. The angered watchman fired one charge at the fellow, who had turned at bay, but with no more effect than the other shots. The next instant the two came together like a couple of tigers. The fierce struggle lasted but a few seconds, when a blow felled Birch to the ground, and Burton sprang upon him. There the contest continued with the same ferocity. Both were powerful men, and each realised what was at stake.

Let go! . . . with his revolver.

With the exception of the command shouted a few minutes before by the watchman, not a word was spoken by the antagonists. Words, like laughter, draw upon one's strength, and neither had an ounce to spare. It was useless to try to slip the cuffs on the wrist of Birch. He was fighting too furiously. Burton therefore concentrated his strength in the single effort to conquer him.

He probably would have succeeded, for, after all, he was the equal of the other in muscular power and his superior in science, but fate played more than one queer freak with the actors in the drama of that evening.

It has been stated that a third party had joined in the chase. The delay caused by the collision between the principals gave this person time to arrive on the scene.

It was the police Superintendent, whose withdrawal from the immediate neighbourhood of the bank did not signify

"Confound you! Why did you strike me?"

the withdrawal of his interest in the expected events. Following the watchman's request, he waited in one of the side streets, from which he could quickly reach the bank, should it become necessary.

Catching sight of a man running with another in hot pursuit, the Superintendent felt that duty required him to take part. Not the equal of either in point of speed, he still made such good progress that he soon reached them after they came together for the second time. The Superintendent had armed himself for this business. Besides the revolver in his pocket he carried a policeman's truncheon. This he drew while he ran, concluding to leave the deadlier weapon for a more serious emergency.

Although Supt. Dixon was usually a cool man, this was the first time he had ever been engaged in an affair of this nature, and he became a trifle excited. He ought to have kept away altogether or have delegated his functions to one of his officers.

He saw two men struggling on the ground, the one underneath striving desperately to exchange positions with the other and almost succeeding, despite the determined resistance of the upper man. One of the parties was the new watchman and the other a stranger. There was no saying, so far as Dixon saw, which was getting the better of the struggle, so he interfered at the critical moment.

Time was so precious that he could not pause to take aim but when the truncheon came down the blow did its work. One of the contestants toppled over, stunned for the instant, while the other, struggling to his feet, was off again at the top of his speed.

"Confound you! Why did you strike *me?*" demanded the irate Burton, quickly recovering himself.

"I — really — beg a thousand pardons — but it looks as if I had made a mistake, Mr. Burton! I hope you'll excuse me."

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"Go home and to bed," was the angry response of the watchman, who, seeing that not a second was to be lost, dashed off a second time in pursuit of the fugitive.

The latter was using his slight advantage to the utmost. Had the delay of the watchman lasted half a minute longer, the criminal must have effected his escape.

The firing of pistols naturally attracted attention in that part of the town, even though the hour was late. Making no reply to the numerous questions of the excited onlookers, the chagrined Superintendent hastened after the flying couple.

The new watchman's head was ringing from the effects of the blow, but he concentrated all his energy upon the task before him and ran at the highest speed, determined to have his man at all costs.

Birch vaulted over a low railing in front of a house, sped across the garden and darted round a building to the rear. Burton did the same, a few yards behind him. The instant the fugitive was out of sight he looked round for something in the nature of a refuge. It was useless to run in this fashion when he was certain of being overtaken. If he could dart into some cover possibly he might throw his pursuer off the track, but there must not be a moment's delay in finding the refuge.

Glancing to the right and left in his frantic search, he saw in the shadows the open door of a small building, and made for it. At the moment he was about to plunge through the opening, a huge dog bounded out, almost into his face. Birch wheeled and leapt the fence at the rear and continued his flight.

The mastiff started to follow, but just then Jack Burton, at full speed, came upon the scene. The dog concluded that *he* would serve his purpose, as well as the other, and went for him. He was a formidable brute, and the watchman did not mean to give him the chance of grasping either his leg or throat. Besides, he was tired of being interfered with while performing his duty: it was becoming monotonous.

The canine was in earnest, and with a threatening growl came bounding towards the watchman.

"I'll settle your hash for you," muttered Burton, aiming with such care that the single bullet bored its way through the skull of the dog and stretched him lifeless.

The interruption had caused a slight delay but not enough to defeat the purpose of the pursuit. Burton had kept the fugitive well in sight and sped after him with redoubled energy. Sam Birch made the fatal mistake of not keeping in the rear of the dwellings on the outskirts, among which he might have found some chance of temporary shelter. Instead of doing that, however, he began making his way back to the street from which he had fled.

He quickly clambered out of sight.

The long chase was beginning to tell upon both pursuer and pursued; much more, however, upon the latter, for a life of dissipation saps the strength of anyone. Birch must quickly discover some refuge or turn about and have it out with Burton, who was now fresher and stronger than he.

At the rear of a handsome house was a small wooden structure, one of several others that were used for domestic fowls, pigeons, and pet animals. It was two storeys high, but the swinging open door was so near the ground that a moderate leap on the part of the fugitive carried the upper half of his body through, and he quickly clambered out of sight.

Burton had no objection to this, for he knew the man had no knowledge of what the issue would be. The watchman quickly walked round the building, to learn what means of egress it possessed, in order to prevent his man stealing a march upon him.

There was a door on the opposite side, facing the back of the residence, but that was even with the ground. The ends of the little building were without any opening. By keeping the back and front under his eye, he could hold Birch securely caged. It will be admitted, however, that it is no easy matter for anyone to watch the front and back of a building at the same time, with an alert foe inside on the look-out for a chance to elude him.

As the best that could be done, Burton drew off as far as his surroundings would permit, and took up his position opposite one of the ends of the structure. By doing this he could detect the fugitive before he could run far. Birch, having found the refuge, made the best possible use of it, though he must have seen it could not serve him long. He did not show himself, but gave his attention for some time to regaining his breath and strength. He also kept an eye on the upper and lower door. He had landed on his feet in the structure without mishap.

After a few minutes' rest, he began groping about to make sure of his location. This was not satisfactory. The sides of the building showed so few streaks of moonlight through the crevices that he struck a match and held it over his head. The house was about a dozen feet square and high and was evidently used for the storage of hay, though there were only a few handfuls of dried grass on the floor. He blew out the match and waited.

The watchman had been in that neighbourhood twice before, and that, too, within the last couple of hours. His keen perception enabled him to recognise the spot, even though his point of view was not favourable. It was curious that the fleeing burglar should have taken refuge on the property of the bank manager, but such was the fact.

Burton's greatest fear, while waiting for Birch, was that of another dog precipitating himself upon the scene. That the thing did not occur within the first few minutes made him come to the conclusion that Mr. Bryant was not the owner of a canine. The watchman felt that he had his man caged but he dreaded the enforced waiting it compelled. It was easy to follow Sam Birch and have it out with him, but no bravery could excuse such an action. It was like hunting a burglar with a lighted candle; the advantage is all with the criminal who has the best possible chance to pick off the other without risk to himself.

But Burton was anxious to learn what was going on at the bank. Matters there must have reached and passed a crisis by this time. It was a pity that he should be compelled to stand idle waiting for his victim to venture out and try it again or to surrender. If the latter was to be the issue it was not likely to take place for a number of hours.

The trees and outbuildings were in alternate moonlight and shadow. The watchman was on the alert and listening, when the outlines of a man appeared approaching the rear of the grounds from the front. He was either someone belonging to "Glenmora" or he had come through the front gate.

When the moonlight fell upon the individual, Burton, with strange emotion, recognised him as his old acquaintance the Superintendent.

"He has his truncheon in hand, too," muttered the watchman. "I wonder whether he's dissatisfied with that blow and wants to try it over again?"

Dixon was anxious to do all he could to repair his blunder. He had striven hard to keep up with the procession and managed to gain enough knowledge of the

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whereabouts of the two men to believe they were not far from the rear of Mr. Bryant's residence, so he looked for them there and thus met Jack Burton.

It took but a minute to explain the situation.

"He's in there," added the watchman, pointing to the small whitewashed building, "and we shall have to wait until he is ready to surrender."

"I see no need of that."

"What can we do?"

"I will bring some of my men and fetch him out."

"'A stag at bay is a dangerous foe,' but that is the best thing to do after all."

"Can you keep him here till we come back?"

"I'll guarantee to do that. I only wish he would come out here, where I can have a chance at him."

The fact that Supt. Dixon was the head of the police of the enterprising town of Middlewick suddenly broke upon that official with all its weight. It was not to be supposed that the fugitive crouching in the barn was aware of the overwhelming fact.

"Wait till I speak to him," he said, walking towards the hay-shed.

"Don't go too close, or he'll fire at you," warned the watchman.

"He will not after I tell him who I am."

The Superintendent had no intention of entering the building, but pausing just below the open door, he called: "Hulloa, you in there!"

"I hear you," came from within.

"I am the Superintendent of the Middlewick Police, and I demand your surrender."

"Why don't you come and take me?"

"If you refuse to give yourself up, I will bring those here who will compel you."

Recognised him as his old acquaintance, the Superintendent.

"What will you do with me if I give in?"

"That remains to be seen; all I can promise is that you shall have justice done you."

"That's what I'm afraid of," was the grim response; "but what is your charge against me? I haven't done anything."

The Superintendent was about to attempt an impressive reply when Burton whispered:

"Tell him you do not know of any charge. The fellow really hasn't done anything this time other than give me a pretty good tussle."

"All you will have to do is to prove your innocence of complicity in the robbery of the bank."

This must have startled the burglar, for, added to what had already taken place, it proved that the intentions of his gang had become known to the authorities. Doubtless he held more than one uncomfortable thought concerning the man who had thus run him down, but unmistakably he was in a tight fix.

"I think it's you that will have to do the proving business, but I'll give myself up," was the unexpected response.

The Superintendent must have felt flattered by this deference to his exalted position.

That Sam Birch was in earnest was proved the next minute by his action.

"Meet me at the front door of my residence," he said, and the couple came round to the front, as requested. Then he came out.

"As a guarantee of good faith," said the watchman, "you will hand over that pistol to Mr. Dixon."

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The fellow complied. As he did so, the three were standing in the full moonlight. Birch turned and looked so keenly at Jack Burton that the latter smiled and asked: "Do you know me, Sam?"

Birch muttered something, and replied louder:

"Yes, and I'll get even with you for this."

"All right; it's a fair warning, but just at present you'll do as you're told."

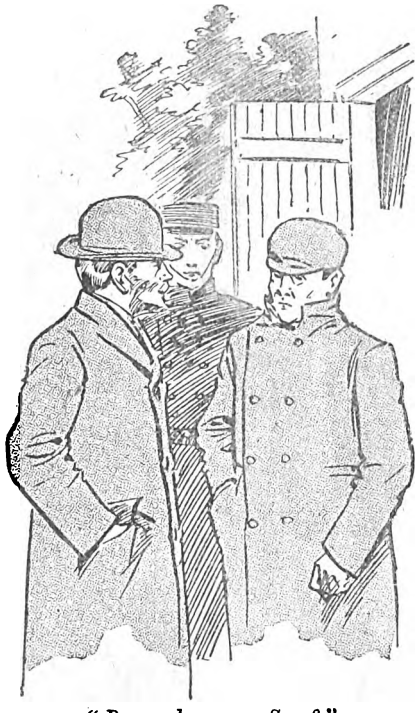
At the request of the Superintendent, Burton walked on one side of the prisoner so as to help guard against any attempt at escape on his part. Shortly after Sam Birch was safely under lock and key.

CHAPTER X.

He was Hard Hit.

Meanwhile a lively scene was going on within the Middlewick Bank. The two policemen heard the parties at the lock of the outer door, while the town clock was striking midnight, and they quietly rose to their feet. It will be remembered that they were at the rear of the building, in the manager's room where they had decided to remain for the present.

Though they had discussed the expected visit over and over again and tried to fix upon their own line of action, it was impossible to do so except in a general way, for a great deal, if not everything, depended upon the course taken by the visitors. If the latter should investigate the interior before beginning their work and so enter the manager's apartment, it would precipitate matters.



"Do you know me, Sam?"

The door connecting it with the outer room was slightly ajar, and the officers stood side by side waiting and listening.

That the burglars were experts could not be doubted. It took them but a few seconds to open the door with one of their skeleton keys, then they found themselves inside with the door shut behind them but not locked.

Naturally, they gave their first attention to the watchman. Old Mr. Warren was stretched out on the floor in the condition of the seven sleepers.

"Well, I'll be hanged," exclaimed Nash, "he's a model watchman. I wish we could always have one like him to deal with."

"Better gag him," suggested the other.

"I don't see the need of that."

He emphasised the last remark by giving the watchman a push with his foot.

The latter showed not the very slightest sensibility to the disturbance.

"Let him alone then," added King; "no need of wasting any time on him."

The couple stood for a minute or two listening intently. Nothing to cause misgiving was heard. The gas was turned up, and by its light the eyes moving hither and thither detected nothing suspicious.

"Let's take a look in there," said King, moving towards the manager's room.

"Hold on," interposed his confederate, "remember we've got plenty to do. It isn't likely any of the bank men are lodging here."

King accepted the suggestion, and the two lightly climbed over the counter and began their preparations.

From the bundle Nash carried he produced several pieces of cloth; these were to deaden the force of the explosion necessary to open the safe. In addition, the bundle contained a quantity of fuse, putty, and a valuable outfit of burglars' implements of the finest make.

These were for active operations. They did not know the combination, nor had they any means of obtaining it. It would not take them long with their admirable tools and their own expertness to bore through the door of the vault, insert the powder, packing the space around the fuse with putty so as to render the explosion complete. The cloth carefully spread over the safe would so muffle the sound that it was not likely to attract the attention of passers-by.

Before operations could be commenced, the cough of the sentinel outside was heard. The couple were doing nothing to make a noise, but they paused and listened. King vaulted lightly over the counter again and turned the key in the lock. Should they find it necessary to leave hurriedly the key could be readily turned, while they were naturally averse to having anyone intrude upon them.

Birch coughed again and, for the first time, the burglars were alarmed. Could it be that their scheme was discovered? They hurriedly re-tied the bundle, ready to fly the moment they were warned to do so.

The understanding with Birch was that the cough meant someone was passing in front of the building. It did not of necessity signify peril to his confederates. If he whistled sharply, it meant "Run at once."

But the whistle was not given. It will be recalled that Mr. Birch was so engaged just then in a controversy with Jack Burton that he forgot about his friends in the building.

"It's all right," whispered Will King. "I thought everybody in this town was asleep by this time."

Justice must be done old Warren while he lies slumbering on the floor. In his remorse over the occurrences of a couple of nights before, he had condemned himself too severely. Besides, there was a reason for his sleeping through those hours, which had not yet come to light.

After his discharge he had slumbered at night like the majority of mankind. Having been awake all day and then summoned to his old duties again just when he was ready to go to bed, he was in sore need of sleep. He had now been unconscious a couple of hours or more, and was liable to awaken at any moment and make trouble.

Appreciating the value of the moments, and believing everything favourable, Nash and King again took out their paraphernalia and made ready for the serious business before them. The first thing was to drill a hole through the front of the vault, just above the combination lock. Nash was on the point of beginning the operation when the door of the manager's room creaked. Bates had accidentally moved it an inch or so.

"Joe," whispered King, straightening himself and looking to the rear. "Did you hear that?"

"It was only the creaking of a door."

"But it wouldn't creak unless someone moved it. I'm going to look in there."

"All right, go ahead."

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Will King again bounded over the counter and walked towards the director's room. He had noticed through the crack of it that the gas beyond was burning. That, however, did not of necessity signify anything, nor was he apprehensive, but he wished the full assurance that could only come with the absolute knowledge that no person was in the inner apartment.

The door opened inwardly and without any hesitation King pushed it back and stepped across the threshold. In the act of doing so he received a blow from a policeman's truncheon which sent him rolling backwards. Before he could recover, Bates, who had delivered the stroke, was upon him.

Morton bounded past his friend, and, leaving him to attend to his man, gave his attention to Joe Nash.

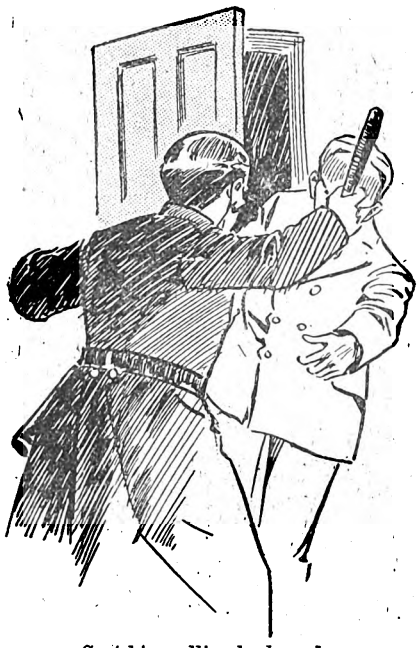
"You'd better come quietly," suggested the officer to the man within the inclosure who was on the point of beginning operations upon the safe. No one could have been more courageous than Constable Morton who went over the counter at a single bound. The daring act was unexpected by Nash and so caught him at a disadvantage.

A sharp struggle ensued, in which the constable appeared to have the advantage until a smart blow between the eyes stunned him completely.

Bates meanwhile had fared better, for, before the half-stunned King could recover himself, a heavier stroke descended, followed by another, which laid him low. Then the constable slipped on the handcuffs.

The sound of his comrade's fall told of the desperate nature of the contest between the other couple, but Bates dare not abandon his man until he had him secure. Just before this was affected, King partially recovered and commenced to resist. Ultimately he was brought into subjection, but it took longer than was anticipated.

During those precious seconds it was a struggle for life on the part of Constable Morton, for consciousness was rapidly leaving him. Quick to see his advantage, Nash put forth every atom of strength he possessed. By a fierce wrench he flung the officer off his chest, and so completely gained the mastery.



Sent him rolling backwards.

The case was one of those in which the burglars threw all restraint to the winds. They were caught and could escape only by putting their assailants out of the way. They had no intention of showing mercy, knowing as they did that none awaited them. Morton bravely did his best but was unequal to the occasion.

Before the burglar—who had become the assailant—could follow up his advantage, an awkward form scrambled over the counter, caught him by the nape of his coat, and held him sideways against the door of the safe.

"Hang you, ain't you ashamed of yourself! Stay there, or I'll pay you."

It was John Warren, the old watchman, who acted and spoke thus. His nap having ended, he was striving to do his duty, still he would have been no match for the younger and more wiry antagonist had he not received help in turn.

Bates, having secured his man, also sprang over the counter, into the inclosure, to learn how Morton was getting on. There was enough light for him to grasp the situation at a glance. The motionless figure of his comrade stretched full length upon the floor led him to believe that he had been killed. It will be understood, therefore, that when Bates brought down his truncheon on the head of Joe Nash, a second blow would have been superfluous. An instant sufficed to secure him against doing any further harm, then Bates gave attention to Morton. He speedily saw that he was badly hurt, though to what extent he could not determine.

"Go and fetch help, Warren, as quickly as you can," said Bates to the watchman.

"Yes, sir. Gracious! If I'd ha' been a second later, it 'ud ha' been all over with him, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, yes. Off with you."

Warren lost no time in obeying commands. He was astonished when he found a strange key in the door.

"How'd that got there?" he asked himself, drawing it out and inspecting it by the gaslight. "It ain't mine, for that's in my pocket."

He thought he did a clever thing when he used his own key to fasten the door, and flung the other one away upon reaching the street.

"That put's an end to any ugly remarks about that," was the satisfied conclusion, though had he thought a little quicker, he must have seen that it could not have mended matters.

The Superintendent and Burton were in another part of the town, but of the half-dozen policemen doing night-duty in Middlewick one was speedily found by the watchman, who, upon hearing what had happened, quickly went to his comrades' assistance. A doctor was secured and taken to the bank. It was strange that the encounter within the building had not become generally known. The only persons found there were the policemen and the two prisoners.

An examination of the wounded constable showed that he had been hard hit, but the doctor pronounced the wound not necessarily dangerous. Morton had rallied and was sitting up, coolly talking over the occurrence.

"I tell you," he said, with a faint smile, as he looked at the watchman, "if it hadn't have been for you, Warren, I should have resigned for good this evening."

They were sweet words to the old man and were heard by all. They were certain to be repeated to Mr. Bryant and, if not too much explanation was demanded by him, were likely to restore his old situation to Warren.

A conveyance was secured and Morton was taken home, where, it may as well be said, he eventually recovered and received a handsome reward, as did his companion, for his bravery in defending the Middlewick bank against the burglars.

The latter, sullen and refusing to speak, were safely lodged in the station about ten minutes before Sam Birch was placed in durance by the Superintendent and Burton.

(To be continued.)

Read the Great War Story in *Pearson's Weekly.*

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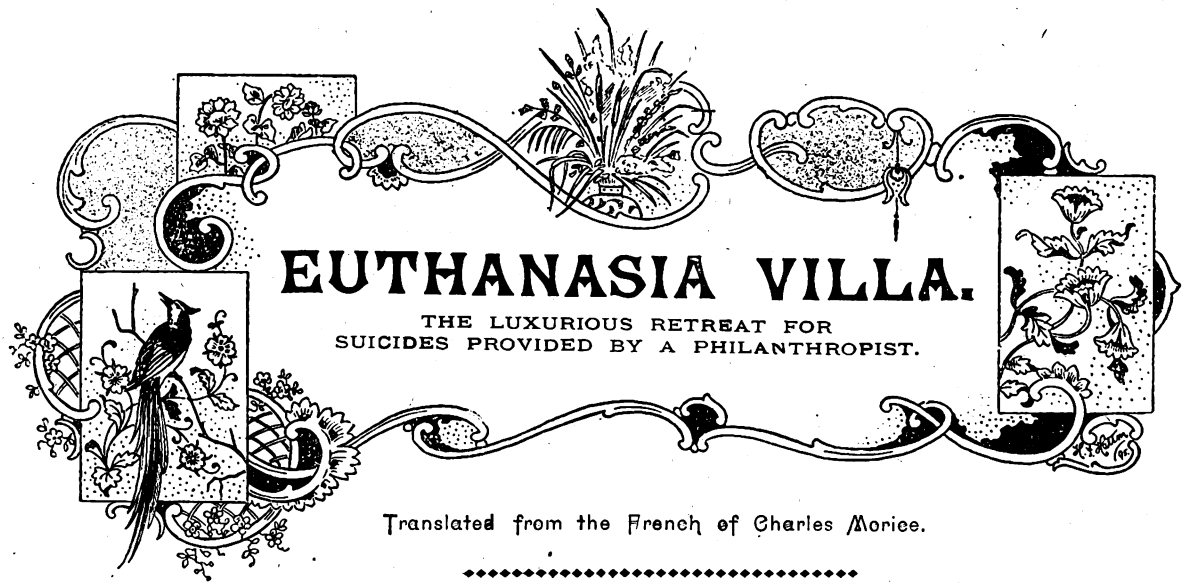

EUTHANASIA VILLA.

THE LUXURIOUS RETREAT FOR SUICIDES PROVIDED BY A PHILANTHROPIST.

Translated from the French of Charles Moriee.

In one of the principal squares of the city stood the great philanthropic establishment founded by Mr. Richard Utterex. Its majestic front was no less than two hundred feet long; there were six rows of balcony windows, and over the principal entrance a sign in gilt letters announced that this splendid building was "Euthanasia Villa."

It was to this institution that those who were disgusted with existence came to seek euthanasia; of course it was intended exclusively for the disgusted ones with money, for those who were not blessed with this world's goods could carry out their sinister designs without the assistance offered to the guests of Euthanasia Villa. But, for the unhappy possessors of millions, Mr. Richard Utterex was really a benefactor.

Each day at least three disheartened mortals came and knocked at his door; this is only a figurative way of speaking, for the door remained continually open. This is how the business was conducted.

One day a young man entered the office. Two clerks at once rose to meet him. The stranger advanced three steps. Naturally he was very pale and tottering. An easy-chair was pushed towards him; he dropped into it, and caressed, from time to time, the small carved death's-heads that ornamented the end of the arms. He threw a glance around the office, which was hung in black cloth.

The clerks made the young man a low bow in an automatic fashion; then, without giving him time to reply to their polite salutation or to explain the object of his visit, one of them asked him, in an obsequious voice:

"What manner of death have you chosen?"

Prepared as he must have been for some such question, the desperate young man could not repress an involuntary shudder. The clerks appeared to be much surprised, and, as the guest did not become calm at once, they went up to him with the same automatic step, and, without saying a word, looked at him. This proceeding had the desired effect. The young man felt that he was in a well-conducted establishment, and this reassured him.

One of the clerks said: "Do you wish to see the prospectus?"

"I beg your pardon," said the young man; but he quickly continued: "The prospectus? Oh, yes, certainly, the prospectus."

Then, with the discreet manner of a waiter in a fashionable restaurant who seeks to learn the guest's preference—Pomard or Sauterne—the clerk handed the young man a richly-bound album, wherein were described the different modes of death furnished by the house. The enumeration of these various methods plunged the reader into a shuddering astonishment. At first he ran over them with his finger rather than with his eye, stopping here and there, amused by the marginal illustrations; then he began again, reading seriously this time, without, however, coming to a decision.

Certainly, hanging had its charms; but what poetry there was about asphyxia with flowers! The soul departs with the breath of the tube-rose! And the poisons, rooms Nos. 4 to 10—a vast choice!

But here are the lost diseases! Ah, the lost diseases! To contract by artificial means leprosy or the black death, to offer to the practitioners of the present day, whom the disappearance of those "affections" renders inconsolable, the occasion of studying them "from the life," to carry away in dying the consolation that you leave in your remains a whole field of delicate experiences! That is without doubt incomparably more noble than death by laughter, the simple idea of which gives you a nausea, and dishonours the ingenious enumeration of Mr. Richard Utterex. But there are ill-natured persons who would be offended at this prospect, however glorious it may be, of having these verses written on their bodies; they prefer a sort of aristocracy of silence. What could be better than the lancing of veins in a warm bath?

"Have you made your choice?" insinuated the clerk in a low voice, without changing his attitude.

"But there is such a variety!" replied the desperate young man.

The clerk accepted the compliment with a polite smile.

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"You must yourself admit," continued the stranger, "that hesitation is excusable under the circumstances."

"Perhaps it would be well to visit the establishment?"

"That will suit me exactly."

"Whenever it will please you to do so."

For the first time the two clerks broke off their work; one opened the office door and stepped aside to allow the guest to pass, and the other indicated the way with an almost affectionate wave of the hand. The young man's first impulse was to obey; but at the second step he changed his mind, and said timidly:

"I should first like to know how much—in short, the terms."

"The price, sir," replied from the end of the room the voice of Mr. Richard Utterex himself, who had just come in, "varies with the class of accommodation desired, and guests pay only on leaving the house."

The young stranger, seeming still undecided, his conductor gently placed his hand upon his arm and invited him to follow. Giving up all thought of resistance he obeyed, and began his tour of Euthanasia Villa.

In the large vestibule of a spacious staircase the visitor was shown, with a reverential bow, which he involuntarily imitated, a large statue of the great Schopenhauer, the patron of the institution. Then they proceeded upstairs.

A door opened; it was the chamber called the Pistol Shot. Like all the other rooms in the house, this was light and elegantly furnished in modern style. As in all the others, too, its principal ornament was a handsome coffin in carved ebony; the cover was placed crosswise on the box, as though awaiting its occupant. There were several divans and reclining chairs about the room; the bed was in rosewood.

"Everything is conducted here with the most perfect discretion," said the guide: "A system of electrical currents, moved by the report, divides in two, lengthwise, whatever piece of furniture the guest has chosen to commit suicide on; a long basket receives the body before it has had time to stain the furniture or the floor with a single spot. Kindly observe that the walls are upholstered with a thickness of four mattresses, so that it is impossible for anyone on the other side of the partition to hear the faintest sound, however powerful the firearm used, even though it were a small Krupp cannon, such as you see there in the corner. Guests have all the time they wish; we never hurry them. Each room is provided with a library abundantly furnished with the most melancholy works. Schopenhauer has been translated for us into all the languages of the old and new worlds.

"Those ten shelves are full of novels that end badly. Upon the eleventh preachers of various religions sound the praises of death. Some serious philosophers and a few poets, Lucretius and Leopardi, occupy the twelfth shelf. As for the conveniences of life (before departing), they leave nothing to be desired. A telephone in each chamber communicates with the office. Orders for meals or whatever else is wanted are executed with the utmost promptness by faceless automatons; we keep a whole company of them here. This delicate attention on Mr. Utterex's part is generally very highly appreciated, for people who are so disgusted with life that they are ready to commit suicide wish to see the human face no more. Finally, will you kindly examine the racks? there you will find either terrible, elegant, or brutal instruments of sudden death."

The visitor took down a pistol and examined it.

"Be careful; they are all loaded."

One by one the stranger saw all the philanthropic ideas imagined by Mr. Richard Utterex. In the Asphyxia chamber, after having explained the perfect obstructions that prevent air from entering when once the door is closed, the clerk proposed to the visitor a brief experience, so that he might judge for himself of its efficiency. This offer, which is rarely accepted, was declined, as charcoal and laughing-gas have but little attraction except as a last resort. Tube-roses tempt more, most of the suicide neophytes being afflicted with sentimentalism. Large masses of fresh flowers were everywhere about the chamber, harmonising with the designs of the carpet and the hangings.

"If you would like a special essence you can have it, for we cultivate all kinds of plants in the large conservatory adjoining the hotel."

"No; it is very complete as it is."

And the inspection was resumed.

The stranger stopped with some curiosity on the third floor, at a landing where there were three doors, each one bearing a sign: "For Science."

The guide pretended to pass by, at the same time watching the astonished young man out of the corner of his eye.

"Well?" queried the stranger.

"Those rooms are occupied, and they are often taken, I must say, to the credit of humanity."

"How so? What takes place within?"

"Mr. Utterex here offers an opportunity of rendering by one's death a great service to human kind. Here in the Experimental Chamber magnanimous individuals, who care nothing about their lives, experiment on substances, to prove to Science whether they are harmless or toxical; others submit themselves to cruel surgical operations and successive mutilations that give the exact measurement of human sensibility. Some days ago a young Russian had a quarter of his cranium sawed off; he survived exactly three hours and fifty minutes. The house doctor, Mr. O'Neil, was wild with joy. 'What a splendid experiment!' he cried."

The stranger tried to share Mr. O'Neil's enthusiasm, but his teeth chattered.

"The Stake Chamber—the death of Hercules! The walls and the ceiling are in precious paste, and are fireproof. The quartering—all you have to do is to place your ankles and wrists in these collars, held to the walls by electric bands. This stool, upon which the person sits, rests upon a button, the pressure on which starts four equal and contrary currents. Submitted to the action of forces rigorously symmetrical, the limbs are at once torn apart. The Decapitation Chamber——"

The visitor remained stupefied at the sight of a marvellous guillotine, in cedar wood, with a keen and gleaming knife. The guide, with the half-smiling manner that he would use to beg you to excuse the trick of a child, opened a wardrobe.

"We reserve here, for the use of imaginative persons, the costume of Louis the Sixteenth. Besides, the blade, in falling, touches a music-box, which at once imitates the historical rolling of Santeree's drums. The Strangulation Chamber—two bow-strings fixed to a small board at the height of the bed, fly to the ceiling and remain there if one puts the weight of his feet upon it. Electricity also plays the principal *rôle* in 'death by laughter.' This is a concealed method; a bed that looks comfortable and invites you to sleep, but as soon as a living person is stretched upon it he is

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riveted by irresistible grapnels, while the illusive couch is instantly decomposed into a multitude of minute brushes, very soft and yet very stiff, which run over the patient's body imitating the pricklings of millions of insects, stopping by preference on the joints, and never ceasing to play strange and skipping marches upon the soles of the feet—but what is the matter, sir?"

The young visitor's face was white; he had slowly tottered back to the wall and was leaning against it for support. Suddenly it seemed to him—pure hallucination, of course—that the artificial insects just described by his guide were making wild excursions from his head to his feet.

"What manner of death have you chosen?"

The stranger was feverishly agitated. "I cannot—I shall prefer——"

"To visit the establishment again, perhaps?"

"No, no!"

"However, you must choose some——"

"Yes, of course, I must; it is evident——"

He gradually regained his self-possession, and at the same time his love of life. He assumed not without effort an easy air, and an appearance of indifference to the physical terrors at which in reality he still inwardly trembled. Suddenly, as though illumined with an idea he said:

"Let us go downstairs."

When they reached the third floor he pointed to the Experimental Chamber, and said:

"You say it is occupied?"

"Yes, it is occupied."

"What a pity! Well," and the stranger affected to contemplate longingly the forbidden threshold—"well, I will wait. Let us descend."

In passing before Schopenhauer's statue he could not help looking it straight in the face, with a sort of defiance.

At the office he was received by Mr. Utterex himself, who welcomed him with a gentle smile.

"The room that I have selected," began the young man, with an easy air——

"The Experimental Chamber?"

"Yes."

"It is occupied," said Mr. Utterex, still smiling, and at the same time offering the visitor a thin sheet of bristol board with gilt edges, on which was written:

Mr. X. to Richard Utterex. Dr.:

To restoring love of life.....£1,000.

LOST:

A Strange Story of a Mysterious Disappearance.

How beautiful she was in her superb calmness; so graceful, so mild, and yet so majestic! Ah, I was a younger man then, of course, than I am now, and possibly more impressionable; but I thought her the most perfect creature I had ever beheld. And, even now, looking back through the gathering mists of time and the chilling frosts of advancing age, and recalling what she was, I endorse that earlier sentiment—she lives in my memory now, as she lived in my presence then, as the most perfect creature ever beheld.

I had gone the round of all the best boarding-houses in town, when at last I went to Mrs. Honeywold's, and there, in her small, unpretending establishment, I, General Leslie Anchester, having been subdued, I trust to a humble and proper state of mind by my past experiences, agreed to take up my abode.

And it was there I first met her! Here was the early maturity of loveliness, perfect in repose, with mild, thoughtful eyes, intelligent and tender, a trifle sad at times, but lighting up with quick brilliancy as some new object met her view, or some vivid thought darted its lightning flash through her brain—for she was wonderfully quick of perception—with an exquisite figure. She spent little on dress (I was sure she was not wealthy); but though there was little variety, her dress was exquisitely neat and in perfect good taste of some soft glossy fabric, smooth as silk and lustrous as satin, and of the softest shade of silver-grey, that colour so beautiful in itself, and so becoming to beautiful wearers; simply made, but fitting with a nicety, more like the work of nature than of art, to every curve and outline of that full and stately figure, and finished off round her white throat with something scarcely whiter. She never wore ornaments of any kind—no chain, no brooch, no ring, or pin.

She had twins—two beautiful, blue-eyed young things, wonderfully like herself—little shy, graceful creatures, always playful. She never spoke of her own affairs, and affable as she was, and gentle in manner, there was something about her which repelled intrusion.

When, after some weeks' residence there, I had gained the goodwill of my simple-minded but kindly little landlady, I cautiously ventured to ask her to gratify my not, I think, unnatural curiosity; but I found, to my surprise, she knew but little more than I did myself.

"She came to me," she said, "just at the end of the evening, one cold, rainy night, and I could not refuse to give her shelter—at least for the night, or till she could do better. I did not think of her remaining; but she is so pretty, and gentle, and innocent-looking, I could not turn her out of my house: could I now? I know I am a silly in such ways; but what could I do?"

"But is it possible," I said, "that she has remained here ever since, and you know nothing more about her?"

"No more than you do yourself, General," said Mrs. Honeywold. "I do not even know where she lived before she came here. I cannot question her, and now, indeed, I have become so fond of her I should not be willing to part with her; and I would not turn her and her little ones out of the house for the world!"

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Further conversation elicited the fact that she was not a boarder, but that she and her little ones were dependent upon Mrs. Honeywold's charity.

One fine summer day I had made an appointment with a friend to drive out to his place in the suburbs and dine with him, returning in the evening. When I came down in the afternoon, dressed for my excursion, I went into the dining-room to tell Mrs. Honeywold she need not wait for me. As I came through the parlour she was there alone. She was sitting on the sofa. A book lay near her, but I do not think she had been reading. She was sitting perfectly still, as if lost in reverie, and her eyes looked heavy with sleep or thought. But as I passed out of the room I looked back. I saw she had risen to her feet, and standing with her graceful figure drawn up to its full height, she was looking after me, with a look which I flatter myself was a look of interest. Ah, how well I remembered that look!

The day had been a beautiful one, though sultry; but in the early evening we had a heavy thunder-shower, the violence of the summer rain delaying my return to town for an hour or two; and when the rain ceased, the evening was still starless, cloudy, and damp; and as I drove back to town I remembered that the night air, although somewhat freshened by the rain, was warm and heavy with the scent of unseen flowers.

It was late when I reached the quiet street where I had taked up my abode, and as I mounted the steps I involuntarily felt for my latchkey, but to my surprise I found the hall-door not only unfastened, but a little way opened.

"Why, how is this, Mrs. Honeywold?" I said, as my landlady met me in the hall. "Do you know that your street door was left open?"

"Yes," she said quietly, "I know it."

"But is it safe?" I asked, as I turned to lock the door; "and so late, too."

"I do not think there is any danger," she said. "I was on the watch; I was in the hall waiting myself."

"Not waiting for me, I hope?" said I; "that was surely unnecessary."

"No, not for you," she answered, "I presume you can take care of yourself; but," she added, in a low voice, "she is out, and I was waiting to let her in."

"Out at this time of night!—that seems strange. Where has she gone?"

"I do not know."

"And how long as she been gone?" I asked, as I hung up my hat.

"I cannot tell just what time she went out," she said; "I know she was in the garden with the little ones, and came in just before tea. After they had had their suppers and gone to bed, I saw her in the parlour alone, and when I came into the room again, she was gone, and she has not returned, and I——"

"Oh, then, she went out before the rain, did she?"

"Yes, sir, sometime before the rain."

"Oh, then, that explains it; she was probably caught out by the rain, and took shelter somewhere and has been persuaded to stay. There is nothing to be alarmed at; you had better not wait up another minute."

"But I don't like to shut her out, General; I should not sleep a wink."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" I said. "Go to bed, you silly woman; you will hear her when she comes, of course, and can come down and let her in." And so saying, I retired to my own room.

The next morning at breakfast, I noticed that my landlady was looking pale and troubled.

"Well, Mrs. Honeywold," I said, with assumed cheerfulness, as she handed my coffee to me, "how long did you have to sit up? What time did she come in?"

"She did not come in all night, General," said my landlady, in a troubled voice. "She has not come home yet, and I am very anxious about it."

"No need of that, I trust," I said reassuringly; "she will come this morning, no doubt."

"I don't know. I wish I was sure of that. I don't know what to make of it. I don't understand it. She never did so before. How she could have stayed out, and left those two blessed little things all night; and she always seemed such a tender, loving mother, too; I don't understand it."

When I returned at dinner-time, I found matters still worse. She had not been seen. My poor landlady was almost in hysterics, though she tried hard to control herself.

To satisfy her, I went off to consult the police. My mission was not encouraging. They promised to do their best, but gave slight hopes of a successful result.

So sad, weary, and discouraged, I returned home, only to learn there were no tidings of the missing one.

"I give her up now," said my weeping landlady; "I shall never see her again. She is lost for ever, and these two poor, pretty little creatures——"

"By-the-way," I said, "if she never does return, what will you do with them?"

"Keep them!" said the generous and impulsive little woman.

"I wanted to say, if she does not return, I will, if you like, relieve you of them. My sister, who lives with me, and keeps my house, is a very tender-hearted woman."

"No! no!" sobbed the poor woman. "I cannot part with them. I am a poor woman, it is true, but not too poor to give them a home: and while I have a bit and a sup for myself they shall have one too. Their poor mother left them here, and if she ever does return she shall find them here. If she never returns, then——"

And she never did return, and no tidings of her fate ever reached us. If she was enticed away by artful blandishments, or kidnapped by cruel violence, we know not. But I honestly believe the latter. Either way, it was her fatal beauty that led her to destruction; for, as I have said before, she was the most perfect creature, the most beautiful Maltese cat that I ever beheld in my life. I am sure she never deserted her two pretty little kittens of her own accord. And if, poor dumb thing, she was stolen and killed for her beautiful fur, still I say, as I said at first, she was "more sinned against than sinning."

Edith Summers.

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LEGENDS OF WOLFVILLE.

BY "DAN QUINN."

Wolfville is a Cattleman's Settlement in Arizona, and the Characters in these Legends are Cowboys.

No. 8.—Short Creek Dave Gets Religion.

Short Creek Dave was a leading citizen of the little camp of Wolfville. In fact his friends would not have scrupled at the claim that Short Creek Dave was a leading citizen of Arizona. So when the news came over from Tucson that Short Creek, who had been paying that metropole a breezy visit, had in an inadvertent moment strolled within the confines of a Gospel meeting then and there being waged, and suffered conversion, Wolfville became a prey to some excitement.

"I tells him," says Tutt, who brought back the tidings, "not to go tamperin' 'round this ere meetin'. But he have done it. He jeest keeps pervadin' about the goin' place, and looks like as I can't get him away. Says I: 'Dave, you don't understand this ere game they're turnin' inside, so you jeest keep out a whole lot; you'll be safer.' But warnin's ain't no good; Short Creek Dave don't regard 'em a little bit."

"This yere Short Creek is allers speshul obstinate that away," said the driver of the Tucson stage, "and he gets them moods frequent, when he jest won't stay where he is, nor go anywhere else. I don't wonder you don't do nuthin' with him."

"Well," said Cherokee Hall, "I reckon Short Creek knows his business. I ain't myself none astonished much by these yere news. I knows him to do some mighty funny things; sech as breakin' a pair of jacks to draw to a three-flush, and it seems like he's just a pursooin' of his usual system in this here religious break. However, he'll be at Wolfville to-morrow, and then we'll know a mighty sight more about it; pending which, let's licker, Mr. Barkeep; please inquire out the nose colour for the band."

The people of Wolfville there present saw no reason to pursue the discussion so pleasantly ended, and drew near the bar. The debate took place in the Gold Mine Saloon; so, as one observed on the issuance of Cherokee's invitation, "They were not far from centres." Cherokee himself was a suave courtier of fortune, who presided behind his own faro game, and, reputed to possess a straight deal box, held high place in the Wolfville breast.

The next day came, and Wolfville began to suffer increased excitement. This feeling grew as the time for the coming of the Tucson stage approached. An outsider might not have detected this warmth. It found its evidences in the unusual activity of monte, high ball, stud, and kindred relaxations; while faro, too, showed a boom spirit, and white chips, which were a commodity ordinarily disposed of at the rate of two bits per white chip, had, under the heightened pulse of the public, gone, in some games, to the dizzy pinnacle of 25 dollars a stack. At last, out of the grey and heated plain, a cloud of dust announced the coming of the stage. Stacks were cashed and games cleaned up, and presently the male population of Wolfville was in the street, to catch as early a glimpse as might be of the newly converted one.

"I don't reckon now he's goin' to look sech a whole lot different neither," said Faro Nell, as she stood near Cherokee Hall, awaiting the coming coach.

"I wonder would it do to ask Dave for a drink?" said Tutt, in a tone of vague inquiry.

"Shore," said Old Monte, "an' why not?"

"Oh, nuthin', why not?" replied Tutt, as he watched the stage come up. "Only he's nacherally a mighty peevish man, that away, an' I don't suppose how his enterin' the fold has reduced the restlessness of that six-shooter of hes'n none whatever."

"All the same," said Cherokee Hall, "politeness among gentlemen should allers be observed; an' I asks this yere Short Creek to drink as soon as ever he comes; an' I ain't lookin' to see him take it none invidious, neither."

With a rattle of chains and a creaking of straps, the stage and its six high-headed horses pulled up at the post-office door. The mail bags were kicked off, the Wells-Fargo boxes were tumbled into the street, and, in the general rattle and crush, the eagerly-expected Short Creek Dave stepped off. There was possibly a more eager scanning of his person in the thought that the great inward change might have its outward evidences; a more vigorous shaking of his hand, perhaps; but beyond those, curious interest did not go. Not a word nor a look touching Short Creek's religious exploits betrayed the question which was tugging at the Wolfville heart. Wolfville was too polite, and then, again, Wolfville was too courteous. Next to horse-stealing, curiosity is the greatest crime of the frontier, and the one most ferociously resented. Wolfville just expressed its polite satisfaction in Short Creek Dave's return, and took it out in hand-shaking. The only incident worth a record was when Cherokee Hall said in a tone of bland friendship:

"I don't reckon now, Dave, you're objectin' to whisky after your ride?"

"I ain't done so usual," said Dave cheerfully, "but this yere time, Cherokee, I'll leave to pass. Jest confidin' the truth to you all, I'm a little bit off on them beverages jest now, an' I'm allowin' to tell you the win an' lose thereof a little later on. An' now if you all will excuse me, I'll canter over to the O. K. House an' feed myself some."

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"I shore reckon he's converted," said Tutt, as he shook his head gloomily. "I wouldn't care none, only it's me as gets Dave to go over to Tucson this yere time; an' so I feels responsible."

"Well, what of it?" said Old Monte, with a sudden burst of energy. "I don't see no kick comin' to anyone, nor why this yere's to be regarded. If Dave wants to be religious and sing them hymns a heap you bet that's his American right. I'll jest gamble a hundred dollars Dave comes out all even an' protects his game clear through."

The next day the excitement had begun to subside, when a notice posted on the post-office door caused it to rise again. The notice announced that Short Creek Dave would preach that evening in the big warehouse of the New York Store.

"I reckon we better all go," said Cherokee Hall. "I'm goin' to turn my box an' close the game at 7.30 sharp; seeing as how several ladies is due to sing a lot in the choir. We might jest as well turn out and give Short Creek the best turn in the wheel, jest to start him along the new trail."

"That's whatever," said Tutt who had recovered from his first gloom, and now entered into the affair with spirit.

That evening the New York warehouse was as brilliantly lighted as a wild abundance of candles could make it. All Wolfville was there. As a result of a discussion held in private with Short Creek Dave, and by that convert's own request, Cherokee Hall took a seat at the dry-good's box which was to serve as a pulpit, to assist in the conduct of the meeting. The congregation disposed itself about on the improvised benches which the ardour of Tutt had provided. At eight o'clock Short Dave walked up the space in the centre reserved as an aisle in company with Cherokee Hall, this latter gentleman carrying a gigantic Bible, which he placed on the dry goods box. Rapping gently on the box for order, Cherokee addressed the meeting briefly:

"This yere is a prayer meeting of the camp," said Cherokee, "and I am asked by Dave to preside, which I accordin' do. No one need make any mistake about this yere gatherin' on account of my presence. This yere is a religious meetin'. I'm not myself given that way, but I'm allers glad to meet people what is, and see that they have a chance in for their ante, and their game is protected. I am one of those, too, who believes a little religion wouldn't hurt this camp much. Next to a lynchin' I don't know of a more excellent influence in a Western camp than these yere meetin's. I ain't expectin' to be in on this play none myse'f, an' jest set here in the name of order an' for the purpose of a square deal. I now introduce to you a gentleman who is liable to be as good a preacher as ever banged a Bible — your townsman, Short Creek Dave."

"Mr. President," said Short Creek Dave, turning to Cherokee.

"Short Creek Dave," said Cherokee sententiously, at the same time bowing gravely in recognition.

"And, ladies and gentlemen of Wolfville," continued Dave, "I shall open this yere play with a prayer."

The prayer proceeded. It was fervent and earnest, and replete with unique expressions and personal allusions. In these last, the congregation took a breathless interest. Towards the close Dave bent his energies in supplication for the regeneration of Texas Thompson, whom he represented in his orisons as a good man, but living a misguided and vicious life. The audience was listening with grave and approving attention when there came an interruption. It was Texas Thompson who rose to address the chair.

"Mr. President," said Texas Thompson, drawing a long breath, "I object to Dave a-tacklin' of the Redeemer for me, and a-makin' of statements which aim to show I'm nothin' more'n a felon. This yere talk is liable to queer me up on high, an I objects to it."

"Prayer is a free-for-all game, and thar ain't no limit on to it," said Cherokee. "The chair, therefore, decided agin' the p'int of order."

"Well, then," rejoined Texas Thompson, "a-waivin' of the usual appeal to the house, all I have got to say is this: I'm a peaceful man, an' have allers been the friend of Short Creek Dave, and I even assists at an' promotes this yere meetin'. But I gives notice yere now, if Short Creek Dave keeps on a-malignin' of me to the Great White throne as heretofore, I'll shore call on him to make them statements good with his gun as soon as the contreebution box is passed."

"The chair informs the gent," said Cherokee, with vast dignity, "that Dave, bein' now an evangelist, can't make no gun plays nor go canterin' out to shoot as of a former day. However, the chair recognises the rights of the gent, an' standin' as the chair does, in the position of look-out to this yere game, the chair will be ready to back his play with a 'Colt's 45' as soon as ever church is out, in person."

"Mr. President," said Dave, "jest let me have a word in yere. I've looked up things a little, an' I finds that the Apostle Peter, who was a main guy of them days, scrupled not to fight. Now, I follers Peter's lead in this. I might add, too, that while it gives me pain to be obliged to shoot up Deacon Thompson in the first half of the meetin' we holds in Wolfville, still the path of duty is cl'ar, an' I shall shorely walk therein, fearin' nothin'. I therefore moves we adjourn ten minutes, an' there is plenty of moon outside, if the chair will lend me its gun—I not packin' of sech frivolities no more, a-regardin' of 'em in the light of sinful bluffs—I shall trust to Providence to convince Texas Thompson that he's away off in this matter. You bet I knows my business."

"Unless objection is heard, this yere meetin' will stand adjourned for fifteen minutes," said Cherokee, at the same time passing over his six-shooter.

Thirty paces were stepped off, and the men stood up in the moonlight street, while the congregation made a line of admiration on the sidewalk.

"I counts one, two, three, and drops the contribution box," said Cherokee, "wharupon you all fires and advances at will. Be you all ready?"

The shooting began on the word, and when the smoke cleared away, Texas Thompson had a bullet in his shoulder.

"The congregation will now take its seats in the store," said Cherokee, "and the deal will be resoomed. Two of you'll carry Texas over to the hotel, and fix him up all right. This yere shows concloosive that Short Creek Dave is licensed from above to pray for whoever he pleases, and I'm mighty glad it occurs. It's shorely goin' to promote confidence in his ministrations."

The concourse was duly in its seats when Dave reached the pulpit.

"I will now resoome my intercessions for our fortunate brother, Texas Thompson," said he.

"I knowed he would," said Cherokee, as two dollars came over from the wounded man to the contribution box. "Texas Thompson is an honourable man, an' you can gamble religious truths always assert themselves."

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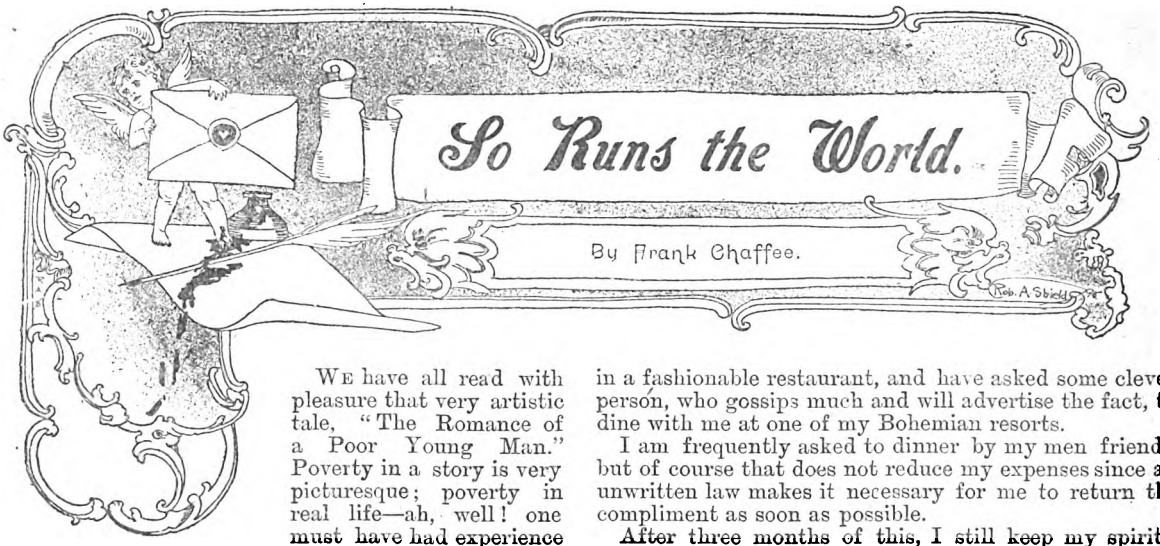

We have all read with pleasure that very artistic tale, "The Romance of a Poor Young Man." Poverty in a story is very picturesque; poverty in real life—ah, well! one must have had experience of it to know what it really is.

I write this as the first realising sense comes upon me of what it means to be poor. It is now three months since I lost my position. I had lived up to the last penny of my salary—lived luxuriously, in fact. My rooms were as smart and as artistic as any in town. I was very much in the cultivated Bohemian set, and one might always meet at my apartments, not the greatest, perhaps, but those on the road to greatness, in the field of art and letters. I was known to dabble in literary work myself, and my small achievements, having some glitter about them, were much overrated by everyone except the editors to whom I tried to sell them, generally without success.

I look back on all this as I write, and do not regret it. It was an education, this meeting and being surrounded by witty, brainy people; and as for the money—ye gods! What is money for if not to buy us the things we want? The prudent ones will say my course was foolish and improvident; those wiser ones, wise with the wisdom of simplicity, will say I did well; in any case it is in the past.

The firm by which I had been employed went out of business, and I found myself stranded. A man of thirty, who has held his head high, may not go out and look for a position, like an office boy. He may let it be known that he is available, and then wait to be sought. I waited, times were hard, and so few firms were looking for experienced men, or willing to pay such a salary as I could accept.

I have managed to keep my rooms, by selling some valuable scarf pins and other jewellery owned. My friends generally suppose me to have an income, or at least to be making a good deal with my pen; and since I do not visibly curtail my expenses, it is a reasonable supposition. My economies have been in the things which people have not seen. I have risen late, made coffee in my rooms, and with it I have taken a roll or a biscuit or two. Having breakfasted so late and so plentifully, I naturally take no luncheon. At night I urge my Bohemian tastes as an excuse for dining at the cheapest of the *table d'hôte* resorts.

The stipend that I do obtain from some paltry newspaper work serves to pay these expenses. Occasionally I have been fortunate enough to sell a story or a sketch, and then I have allowed myself to be seen at breakfast in a fashionable restaurant, and have asked some clever person, who gossips much and will advertise the fact, to dine with me at one of my Bohemian resorts.

I am frequently asked to dinner by my men friends, but of course that does not reduce my expenses since an unwritten law makes it necessary for me to return the compliment as soon as possible.

After three months of this, I still keep my spirits, outwardly; still am able to say laughingly, when questioned:

"I don't know whether I shall go back to a commercial life or not; Bohemia is very fascinating."

Three months! It is becoming a strain physical and mental. How can I keep my rooms? I have no more jewellery to sell. I fear to sell anything else, lest it should be noticed—and my position is almost entirely dependent upon my rooms.

* * * * *

I have sold an old etching for enough to pay my rent for another month. One of my newspaper outlets was closed to-day. The editor, who is a good friend of mine said: "To tell you the truth, old chap, I have given your column to a poor devil who really needs the money."

I went away and called at another newspaper office. I boldly told the editor I wanted a position. He laughed as he said:

"Oh, your pen is too clever for hack work—you would better stick to special articles."

"Can you use some specials?" I asked.

"Well, not just at present," he replied, "but do us something in your fresh, breezy style, and we will use it as soon as we can."

I have tried to write to-night, tried to be fresh and breezy. One might as well try to fly with a mill-stone tied to one's neck. Who was it said a man could do his best literary work with the wolf howling at the door? Whoever it was, I'll wager he had dined well when he had said it.

* * * * *

Hurrah! I have received a cheque for a story I sold a month ago. I had quite forgotten it. To be sure it is only a small amount. A few months ago I should have spent it for a box of cigars, and have thought no more about it; now I must stretch it to the utmost, but, at least, I will ask Carlos to dine with me once. Good, true-hearted Carlos, he wonders why he sees so little of me nowadays. I tell him I am writing, that I am doing some serious work. Carlos, old chap, did you but know the truth, did you but know that your friend whose lighter vein so entertains you is sometimes hungry, how your heart would ache, and how you would open your purse and insist upon sharing your plenty!

Why is it I may not take the money I so much need

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from Carlos, who has plenty, and who loves me better than any brother? A man may not take money that he does not earn. I would like to take money from Carlos, and yet there is something within me that will not let me.

* * * * *

I took Carlos to dinner last night. We had a nice little dinner and a bottle of wine. It made a sad hole in my little capital; but Carlos was so happy, and said it seemed so like old times, and then we came up to my rooms and smoked and chatted. Carlos smoked his college pipe, a great meerschaum, which he had spent his four college years in colouring. When he got up to go home, he looked at the pipe tenderly, and, turning to me, said:

"Old chap, I want to give you this pipe. I know you like it, and I want you to have it."

Dear old Carlos, he loves that pipe better than anything he owns; and so he gives it to me, whom he loves even better. Ah, me! and even to him I may not tell the truth about myself. I must arrange that Carlos shall one day have his pipe back again, and if things do not shape themselves soon in a better way for me, I shall—well, I don't know what I shall do.

* * * * *

To-night I am dazed. I have to-day been searching for a position—for something to do, for anything by which a gentleman may earn his bread. I have urged my ability, have offered to do anything that a gentleman may. I have called on every one of influence in the commercial and literary world. They decline to see that I need what I ask for; I cannot impress them with my seriousness. Great Heavens! Is it only the creatures who wear their hearts on their sleeves, and who shed tears in public, that can be taken seriously? Is sympathy given only to noisy anguish? Is a helping hand held out only to him who whimpers about his troubles and whines for help?

* * * * *

I find that I can give up sugar and cream with my coffee in the morning. It saves quite a little, and as the coffee is less palatable, one does not drink so much, so that also is a saving. I take my dinner in my rooms now. There is rather a sameness in each day's bill of fare, but I dare say it is healthful; and after all, one should eat to live, not live to eat. I wonder how long a man can live on such fare?

* * * * *

I am getting deplorably thin. I fancy it is having so much uncertainty on my mind. My clothes are really absurd, they hang so loosely on me. Carlos came back from a yatching trip to-day, looking brown as a berry. He looked at me a minute, and then said:

"Jove, old man, you've grown thin. I suppose you are working like a slave, and I dare say you have ruined your appetite. I don't believe you eat enough."

Good Carlos, I could not tell him how right he was, nor why.

"Look here, old chap, come away and dine with me. I'll bet I'll order a dinner you can eat," said Carlos.

A man who has not the price of a dinner for himself may not accept a dinner from his friend, so I could only say:

"Thank you, no, Carlos. I have some work to do. I'll get a bite later;" and Carlos was hurt and left me.

* * * * *

Being very poor was harder than I thought, and I was getting so desperately weak that I seemed to be losing my grip—but I don't think that any one guesses how poor I am. My stock of clothes holds out well, and I think they will last as long as I—as long as usual. I seem to be drifting towards something, I don't know what.

* * * * *

Another month has gone, and my rent is far overdue. The landlord is very considerate, and had given me ten day's grace. I do not seem to have any spirit left. I was severely criticised to-day at one newspaper office where I still have a little work—they say that my work has lost its snap and brilliancy. I could not tell them that a hungry man could not be brilliant, and I promised to get back to the old vein.

* * * * *

I wonder what men do who are as poor as I, and have others dependent upon them. Thank God, I have no one—no one to whom I am everything. If anything should happen to me, a lot of people would be madly sorry for a few days, and say:

"Clever chap, but lacked force." "Brilliant, perhaps but oh, so ill-balanced!" Then they would forget me. Carlos? Well, Carlos would care, yes, and grieve truly for the friend that he loved, without even understanding.

* * * * *

My ten days' grace with the rent is up. I must give up my rooms, but I will give them up in my own way. I have been reading in something of Kipling's how the chaps in India speak of dying as "going out." I think I will "go out." I think I will "go out."

I don't like the idea of suicide. I have always held it cowardly and weak. I have said that a man who took his own life was a fool—well, I was right, he is a fool, therefore he should die.

I wonder if I have strength enough to carry me to the river that will be kind to me and tell no tales. I must destroy this journal first, or all my efforts to keep my secret will be lost, and they will know I have been hungry.

I don't understand this peculiar faintness that comes over me now and then. It must be because I have not eaten anything to-day. Ah, well, many better men have fared worse.

"Going out." I like that phrase; and yet, going out into what? Going out into what? Going where? Oh, I do not know! I will not go out into an unknown country. Better bear the ills we have than to fly to those——

* * * * *

The papers of the next morning contained the following notice:

Suddenly, of heart failure, John Carlisle, aged thirty years. Mr. Carlisle, whose death occurred yesterday, will be much missed in literary and artistic circles, where he was a great favourite. He has been a contributor to most of our periodicals, and wielded a brilliant pen. Mr. Carlisle was a man of wealth and good social position. He has been failing in health for some time.

It was Carlos who came in late that night to find his friend lying, with the pen still in his fingers, pointing towards the unfinished sentence. No one but Carlos has ever seen that journal, and it is Carlos now who writes it here, that those who run may read, and learn the lesson.

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By Winifred Graham. *Author of "Through the Valley," "Six First-Class Passengers," etc.*

CHAPTER XXI.

Life is Thorny, and Youth is Vain.

When Quamina can be quieted and her fears calmed, the truth is gradually drawn from her. She has seen a man in a black mask prowling on his hands and knees in the bushes round the house. She leant out of her window and screamed, whereupon he sprang on to a horse, and galloped up the hill like a madman.

Quamina cannot be persuaded it is not the devil himself haunting their domain, and is petrified with terror for the rest of the evening.

"I should feel inclined to put the masked man down to Quamina's vivid imagination," declares Eleanor, "if you had not personally encountered him, Carol. He is like a sort of 'troll,' one of Ibsen's 'helpers and servers.'"

Quinton has given Eleanor "The Master Builder" to read, himself being a believer in the strange theory of will power. He is much upset by Quamina's story, bewildered at the mystery shrouding this evil demon. His life is becoming a purgatory on earth; he goes in daily dread of some fresh disaster. He says little to Eleanor, but she notices he does not sit out in the verandah, preferring the shelter of four walls, as if in mortal fear of something.

"Does he picture a phantom shooting in the dark?" she wonders.

She offers to sing, but he silences her with a petulant movement and gruff word. He is not in the mood for music. The loaded revolver he always keeps in his room is brought down and laid beside him as he smokes and reads.

Eleanor is grieved to see him so unhinged. It is a pitiable thing when a man loses his pluck, and the woman must play the part of consoler and encourager.

The following morning, to her surprise, Quinton seems no less frightened than the previous night. He refuses to go out, and sits in moody silence or paces the room—both equally trying to the patient Eleanor. At last the idea seizes her that if she shows daring and goes out alone, leaving him to brood in solitude, it may spur Quinton to rouse himself and cast off his apprehensions. Surely he will not be outdone by a woman!

"I am going for a stroll," she announces calmly.

"Oh! Are you?"

His lips twitch nervously. He does not volunteer to accompany her.

She takes up a large shady hat, and winds a long white veil over her face.

"Won't you come, too?" she asks mildly.

"No, certainly not, and I think you are very foolhardy to go."

She stares at him in amazement.

"My dear boy, are we to stay in for ever because of old Quamina and her ugly sayings? If the devil is coming for me, he'll come in whether I hide or not; besides, I do not believe in devils!"

"No, but living assassins, modern highwaymen, who scour the country to shed blood, seeking whom they may devour. If you take my advice you will stay safely indoors."

But, for the sake of example, Eleanor shakes her head. If she gives in to him now their life will be one of cowering seclusion. There is something convincing in the light of day that drives from her heart all qualms and misgivings.

"I see no reason why we should not walk abroad just the same as Elizabeth or any other person. You were only attacked once, and that was at night. Look, for instance, at the white woman on the charger. She was alone. I don't think even a highwayman, though, would tackle her," with a low laugh.

"She'd be a pretty good handful for anybody. I could imagine her mesmerising a lion with those eyes. I have no doubt she is a crack shot, too, from the bold way she carried her gun. She was a regular amazon."

"You forget I have never seen the white stranger you allude to."

"Of course not. She passed when you were looking for the dog on that unfortunate day. Well, good-bye for the present, dear. Take care of yourself, and if you like to come and meet me I shall be delighted."

She leaves the house singing, hoping her bravado will have the effect of re-assuring Carol.

As she goes he flings his book on the ground, stretching out his arms like a caged bird beating its wings against the bars.

"It can't last much longer," he hisses between his teeth; "it *won't* last much longer. Thank goodness I can see the end."

Eleanor's mind is so full of thought that she does not heed the direction in which her steps turn. She walks like one in a dream, busy with her own thoughts. A thousand ideas flit through her brain. She lives over her miserable past. Even the early days at Copthorne return vividly. She is a merry child swinging on a gate; a lazy girl lolling on a hayrick; a frivolous wife, sporting her gay attire in the Brussels Bois; a weary woman sighing at her lot in the house on Richmond Terrace; and then the realisation of the

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present rushes over her, and she starts as if suddenly awaking from sleep.

There are steps at her side; she turns, remembering Carol's warning.

Elizabeth Kachin stands before her, they are face to face.

From sheer force of habit Eleanor stretches out her hand in greeting, but draws it back sharply, gathering her scattered wits together. There is a cold look in Elizabeth's eyes. Eleanor shivers though the sun scorches, for the frosts of sin are very bitter. Mrs. Kachin averts her head, and passes her without a word. Little Tombo, who is following in the rear, runs up and raises his face for a kiss; but his mother calls to him quickly, while Eleanor pushes him away. "Why is she angry with me?" he asks Elizabeth; "why doesn't she come and see us now?"

Eleanor hears the words. They cut deeper than an assassin's knife. Carol was right. Retribution is on the road, waiting to devour her body and soul. She paces on with bent head, the hot blood in her cheeks, and a lump in her throat.

A third shadow crosses her path, this time it is Big Tombo. Her eyes meet his fearlessly. He bares his head, bows low, and Eleanor smiles sadly.

"Men are kinder than women," she thinks, as she wanders on. "They judge less harshly. When their companions sin they do not cast them out to sink lower in the mire, they give them a hand, instead of a kick! But women take upon themselves to dash their sisters with cruel force upon the stones."

It was good to be alone with her sorrow, her shame.

She breathed a prayer from the depths of her soul—a wordless invocation. She is close to the jungle now, and the pleasant shade of the foliage cool her feverish brain.

She steps fearlessly into the thick undergrowth. Then pauses, for the sound of a horse attracts her attention. It is the heavy tread of the huge charger, on which that handsome white stranger, gun in hand, is seeking prey.

Eleanor watches the flash of those wonderful eyes, there is something unholy, devilish, in their unusual splendour. Her full red lips are drawn in and compressed.

She raises her gun, and before Eleanor can cry out, the woman has fired!

The bullet whizzes past her head, for a moment her heart stops beating, the narrow escape fills her with horror!

She fancies the stranger saw her before she pulled the trigger, and let off her gun out of sheer devilment, to show her accuracy.

But scarcely has she recovered from the fright than a second report is heard from the bushes close by, and the great charger, on which this reckless sportswoman is seated, falls dead beneath her. She rolls off the saddle, and stands like a fury over the body.

"What villain has killed my horse?" she cries aloud, in a deep voice, which even in its anger sounds strangely fascinating, despite the masculine slang.

Eleanor rushes forward.

"The unseen hand!" she exclaims, hardly knowing what she says.

"How do you mean?" asks the tall woman.

"Some one shot from the bushes; didn't you see? First of all you nearly hit me; it was the closest shave I ever had, and immediately your horse fell——"

"I'll soon find out who has been making a target of me," muttered the stranger.

So saying, she fires recklessly into the bushes; but there is no sound, no cry.

Eleanor watches this wild creature curiously. Surely she will apologise for nearly killing her through inexcusable carelessness.

But she says no word; only watches the smoke rise, and anathematises the fate that has slain a useful beast.

Eleanor forgets her own grievance, and sympathises with the stranger's loss.

"It could not have been done intentionally," she declares.

"I don't believe in chance; it was a dead aim, depend upon it."

Eleanor's eyes expand at this remark.

"Who are you?" she asks. "What is your name?"

"I am a woman," replies the other, with a mocking smile; "my name is Paulina."

She shows no wish to be acquainted with Eleanor's identity.

"What will you do without your horse?"

"Get another, of course."

"But now?"

"Walk."

"Then you live in these parts? I hope in the future you will be more careful how you shoot at random. It would not have been very pleasant for either of us if you had hit me."

"What are you doing walking about by yourself?"

Eleanor looks up and laughs.

"Not risking other people's lives, at any rate."

"I wish I could unravel the mystery of my unknown assailant! Have you any idea who watches your movements and revenges himself on my carelessness?"

A new light flashes across Eleanor at these words. This weird adventure becomes more interesting and amazing at Paulina's suggestion.

"I don't understand you."

"All the better, perhaps."

The abrupt answer startles Eleanor, a puzzled look creeps over her face.

"Why can't you say what you mean?" she asks hotly, looking at Paulina with sudden dislike and repugnance.

The stranger laughs, shoulders her gun, and turns away.

"Where would you have been now," she cries in parting, "if I had shot you down by mistake like a jungle fowl?"

There is a taunting sneer in the words.

A hateful thought steals into Eleanor's mind. This woman, who swears and treats her with such abominable coolness, knows something of her past or present, possibly from Elizabeth, with whom she may be acquainted. This last remark is an insinuation of her unfitness to die, and that her soul is ripe for perdition. The implied slur gradually increases and exaggerates itself in Eleanor's brain, sensitive to a degree. She sees in it a deliberate insult, and following Paulina, she demands:

"Before you go, please apologise for your carelessness. I am not accustomed to be made a mark of, either for bullets or jests."

Paulina stops, and looks her up and down in a manner that makes Eleanor feel like a pigmy facing a giant.

She takes out a cigarette, places it between her teeth, and hands her case to Eleanor.

"Have one?" she asks, with *insouciance*. Eleanor is staggered. She does not know whether to take this as a fresh slight or a very lame apology.

Faint pulses of quivering sunbeams glance through the trees, playing round the dead body of Paulina's horse. The old oaks rear their heads to a sky of purest turquoise, but Eleanor has no heart to notice the beautiful aerial effects. She is wondering if the proffered cigarette is meant as an olive branch or otherwise.

She gazes in mute disgust.

"Have you never seen a weed before?" asks Paulina vivaciously. "You are the type of woman, I suppose, who sits at home and arranges flowers, very artistically no doubt. You would pose in limp gowns of gauzy drapery, like a pictured saint, and expect your husband or your lovers to grovel and worship. But you are dangerously near to the borderland separating the sublime from the ridiculous. You expect *me* to apologise for a shot at random, which cost a valuable horse its life. Some savage black who worships your fair form at a distance, most likely paid it back with interest."

"You are a very vulgar woman," exclaimed Eleanor. "I hope I shall never see you again."

"Don't use that word 'vulgar,'" she replies, "it's so low class."

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"You don't mind what you say to me because I am alone and unprotected," cries Eleanor with almost childish petulance, the tears glistening in her angry eyes. "If Carol was here, he would defend me."

"Carol," she laughs, "who is the staunch and gallant Carol?"

But Eleanor will not answer; she feels desperately affronted, and turns away.

The women walk in opposite directions; the day is dying.

"Well! you are back safely; any adventures?" asks Quinton, as she enters the house pale and weary.

Eleanor sinks into a chair, slowly unwinds her veil, and flings her hat impatiently upon the sofa. She is so seriously put out, that for the moment she dares not trust herself to speak.

"Anything the matter, eh?"

Eleanor clears her throat.

"Yes."

Quinton sits bolt upright from his lounging attitude.

"What?" he says, staring at her intently.

Then she recounts her scene with Paulina, word for word, while Quinton listens breathlessly.

"Her horse *shot from under her?*" he cries, as if that is of far more importance than Eleanor's narrow escape.

"Yes, dear, wasn't it awful? It might have been you or me! I do believe the masked man is on the warpath, only he went for *her* this time instead. It may be a lunatic, for every act seems so perfectly motiveless."

"I told you not to venture out," he says, his face reddening with annoyance. "You *would* go against my wishes, and suffered for it accordingly. The idea of getting into conversation, and actually deigning to quarrel with a stranger. It was most humiliating and lowering. Another time if you meet this 'Paulina,' as you call the white amazon, kindly avoid her. This merely confirms me in the conviction which has grown upon me lately, that this place is no longer fit for us to dwell in. I, for one, am sick of it, and long for a taste of clubdom and life again."

"Oh! Carol!" she exclaims, and the words are wrung from her like a sharp cry.

"Don't look so absurdly miserable, my dear," he says hastily, dreading a scene with all the shrinking of his cowardly nature. "I won't say anything to vex you again. I was only cross; forgive me."

Eleanor's heart goes out to him with all the old yearning tenderness.

Forgive him! Why, she would forgive Carol anything—he is her all. She falls on her knees at his side, and draws down his face for a kiss.

As she does so, the sound of a loud, rich, stirring voice, swelling out on the evening air, reaches them. They exchange hurried glances, start to their feet, and look cautiously out.

It is "Paulina," swaggering down the hill with a devil-may-care mien, her gun still over her shoulder, her hands in her pockets.

They catch the words, which ring full and clear:

"And constancy lives in realms above,
And life is thorny and youth is vain;
And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain."

"She *is* like a 'troll,'" murmurs Eleanor, "shrieking in the night."

"A magnificent creature," says Carol. "Quite a picture!"

His eyes are riveted on the retreating form!

CHAPTER XXII.

By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only.—E. A. Poe.

Eleanor is taking her siesta, wrapt in dreams of Carol and love. No thought of evil disturbs her rest, for to-day the clouds seem to have blown over. Carol has been tender and adoring as of old, he speaks no more of the dreaded uprooting, but is peaceful and content. Yet while she lies in fancy-land—asleep—she cannot see him in the room below, a look of excitement on his face while he writes with feverish haste on a large sheet of flimsy paper.

The words reel rapidly off his quill, he never pauses, and his eyes are aglow with the fire of energy.

Quamina, who has been in the verandah, enters with a tray of cooling drinks and places them by his elbow. She has never seen the Sahib writing before, she did not know he could hold a pen, and his engrossed attitude awakes her curiosity and suspicion. He does not hear her come in till she puts the glasses beside him, then he pushes them away and tells her to go.

Quamina steals across the room.

Why is the Sahib writing? It is not his way. His quill flies like a thing possessed across the paper, and when he pauses it is to wipe the drops of perspiration from his heated brow.

"This is the Sahib's hour for sleep," thinks Quamina. "It is a secret message that he writes at such a time, when his wife is absent, dreaming in the other room." She steals into the verandah and watches. A sudden idea comes to her ignorant mind, which, as she turns it over in her brain, amounts to a firm conviction.

"The Sahib is making a compact with the devil. He is frightened of that tall spirit in the black mask, and is coming to terms with him. Maybe he will offer his house and his servants, his wife even, to be himself released from the terror of that grim presence."

Quamina shakes from head to foot. Her white teeth rattle. Surely the Sahib's face is taking the likeness of the Evil one, as he sits alone, or why does a sinister smile flit across his lips, while he perpetually pauses to listen, and look nervously towards the door? Once he rises, opens it, standing a moment, looking towards Eleanor's room. But there is no sound, and he returns to his desk reassured.

Finally the letter ends. He folds it carefully, looking at the dashing signature with some pride. He takes up a red seal, strikes a light, and drops a huge round of burning wax upon the envelope.

"The deed is done," thinks trembling Quamina; "the devil has been written to. He will scan those hasty words in his unholy abode, and bargain with the Sahib, till an arrangement shall be made."

Her suspicions increase as Quinton, listening once more at the door, snatches up a hat with a guilty air, creeping out into the broiling sun.

Quamina by this time is wild with curiosity, and as Carol hastens down the hill, the letter in his hand, she follows stealthily at a discreet distance.

"Perhaps he will give it himself to the devil. Ah, the poor Sahib!" she mutters.

Quinton never pauses till he is out of sight of the bungalow; then turning to his right he places the sealed envelope in a crevice of a rock, hidden from sight.

Quamina watches wonderingly the post-box of the devil.

She marks the spot in her mind's eye, and fearing detection hurries back unobserved.

For the rest of the day she thinks of nothing but the Sahib's letter, and its strange hiding place. She pictures the "Nats" surrounding the spot, and bearing it in triumph to their chief.

She watches her master curiously, but by no sign does he reveal that anything unusual has occurred, save that he laughs more frequently, and seems as light-hearted and high-spirited as a boy.

"Maybe he has paid the devil off," Quamina surmises.

Captain Stevenson and Major Short ride over, much to Eleanor's delight, who enjoys a chat with the outer world as keenly as Carol.

She longs once again to hear Major Short's melodious voice, and bringing her guitar, begs for "Mandalay."

But he shakes his head.

"I shall tire you of the one song," he declares.

"Not when it is the favourite," she protests. "Only four

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lines, if you will, or a single bar of the tune. I love the sad refrain."

He follows her on to the verandah. Quinton and Captain Stevenson are talking and smoking within.

They catch the words between the pauses in their conversation.

"Ship me somewhere east of Suez, where the best is like the worst,
Where there ain't no ten Commandments, and a man can raise a thirst.
For the temple bells are callin', and it's there that I would be,
By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin' lazy at the sea."

"Dreadful morals!" laughs Captain Stevenson.

"Do *you* love the East?" asks Eleanor, as Major Short lays aside the guitar.

"Yes, well enough, but I get terribly homesick at times. I long to draw round a huge log fire in the old hall at home on a still winter's evening, with the shutters shut and the curtains drawn, and my feet on the fender. No one has any conception of the bliss of those long, luxurious hours over the flame and the coal. Those who have it don't appreciate it. Imagine yourself nipped by a biting frost coming suddenly in to such a scene of warmth and ease, to lose yourself in the depths of an enormous spring chair, and gaze in that wilderness of red, while the wood crackles, and blue flickers up like a phantom light in the blazing scarlet. It is many years since I passed a good old English Christmas, with plum-pudding and bells chiming over the snow. Bah! I cannot endure to think of it—I get so green with envy."

"I am afraid I never cared for the winter. The sun is better than artificial warmth—the East is rosier than the fireside."

"But you must yearn sometimes to get home to your family and friends. Have you no mother you long to kiss—no father who is pining for a sight of his daughter's smile, and old chums waiting to greet you with a hearty handshake and cheery welcome."

Eleanor shakes her head mournfully—her large, soft eyes look sad and wistful—she is no hypocrite—she never could pretend.

"No; England is all a blank. My whole interest in life is centred in my husband."

Involuntarily a pang of pity shoots through the man's heart. He hardly knows why, since she is so happy in Quinton's love.

He mistrusts him, for men are quicker in reading each other than a woman blinded by skin-deep fascination.

Many a trusting heart has been won by the pink light from a lamp falling on a handsome profile, by the faultless cut of a frock coat, or by a good seat on horseback.

Poor little Eleanor! Poor humanity!

"It is a mistake to rely too much on love," says Major Short. "It sometimes fails us, and then——"

He pauses, seeing the look of pain upon Eleanor's face.

"I was speaking of myself," he adds half apologetically. "Look for instance, at my parents, at home in the old country. What good is their affection now? What use am I to them, stuck here in India? True, we correspond, but letters give us no sight of the familiar face, no kiss from the lips that may be dead and cold before we meet again. But love, Mrs. Quinton, is over for ever in my life, it is a memory alone, a dream of the silent past."

Eleanor's eyes are deeply sympathetic; she is a woman to inspire confidence.

Major Short continues, though he is surprised at himself for so doing:

"Yes, I was in love once, it was the one sincere and overruling passion of my life." He lowers his voice as he speaks. "You brought it back to me when you said that all your interests were centred in your husband."

He holds out a little case to Eleanor.

"I alway carry this about with me; it is her portrait. Look at it."

Eleanor opens the case reverently, and gazes with a certain awe at the beautiful face within. She fancies there is a mystery in the far-away expression of the woman's eyes. But, after all, it is only the mystery of death.

"That picture was taken after she knew she must die,' he says. "They would not let me marry her then."

His eyes are lowered; Eleanor fancies they are moist.

"Fate is very cruel," she murmurs.

"Yes, when the poetry of existence turns to prose, all the light dies out. I can never love again. Sentiment to me now is as a shallow stream."

Quamina appears with the tray of drinks again. Her eyes looks wild; she shambles along; her knees knock together.

"What is the matter with that woman?" asks Major Short, as she staggers away.

"She is frightfully superstitious, and some nights ago she thought the devil had come for Carol, and she has never been the same since. She crouches about like a creature demented. Sometimes I fancy she must be insane."

Major Short quotes from Pope with a dry smile:

"Lo! the poor Indian, whose untutored mind,
Sees God in clouds, or hears Him in the wind."

"But there is sense in that," Eleanor declares. "God is in all Nature; every blade of grass manifests Him."

Then she remembers she is still clasping that small case, and looks down once more on the expressive features of the beautiful woman.

"Talking of death—and love," she says slowly, harping back to the old subject, "I often wonder what I should do if anything happened to Carol. Imagine me here, in a strange country, alone, friendless! What if he sickened with fever, or was wounded by an enemy, or if he died?" A shudder of apprehension runs over.

"I hope you will never call yourself friendless while we—while I am within your reach. I have suffered myself; I know what sorrow is. Should you ever be in any trouble, Mrs. Quinton, or need a helping hand, remember you can rely on me."

Eleanor looks at him with that serious and admiring glance of hers, expressive of greater gratitude and deeper wonder than any words.

"You are *very* good," she says at length. "If all men were so kind, I think women would be better and place surer trust in them."

Two large trees in front of the verandah, with bending boughs, meet and make an archway of feathery foliage, in which the birds lodge. Eleanor's eyes turn to the drooping green, and then to the distant hills. She has a vague foreshadowing of coming evil. She sees the oxen yoked together, dragging their loads; she wonders if they are happier after all than mortals like Major Short and herself. Two of these patient animals are drawing a Burmese public carriage, with a black boy looking out of the quaint covering, like a little house on two wheels. They pause to drink in the Irrawaddy; she sighs to think how sadly they need refreshment. In the thatched huts and tall palms, Eleanor pictures Copthorne—it rises as a mirage—till Major Short dispels it by some casual remark. He notices her listlessness, for she starts as he speaks.

"Forgive me," she says, smiling wanly, "but I was miles away."

"How interesting. May I not follow you? What did you see?"

"I conjured up a farm-house and green English lanes, gold cornfields, rustic reapers, and honest workers. They were getting in the harvest."

Captain Stevenson's cheery voice, and Quinton's musical laugh interrupts the conversation as they join Eleanor and Major Short.

"It is time we were making tracks. What do you say, Short?"

"I suppose so, but it is always hard to tear oneself away from pleasant companions."

"When shall we meet again?" asks Eleanor gaily. "Can't we arrange a day next week? Ride over in the cool of the morning to breakfast."

"Thanks—delighted. There is a peculiar fascination in your charming home and hearty welcome."

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Quinton smiles enigmatically, as he watches them ride away.

Eleanor slips her hand in his.

"You seemed very merry to-day," she says. "They quite enlivened us, didn't they, Carol?"

"Yes; it certainly makes a difference having somebody to speak to. Don't you notice it, dear?"

He looks down at her steadfastly, and for the moment Eleanor's expression turns the unscrupulous man dizzy with a vague sensation nearly approaching regret.

He sees in her eyes the overflowing of a heart whose passionate adoration amounts to idolatry.

He is touched and softened. He presses her lips, though they no longer thrill him, and she in her mute worship cannot define the change.

Her love, he thinks, so freely given, so utterly beyond control, is after all a pitiable spectacle.

He scrutinises her fair face critically; it seems insipid to him now. Its pale spirituality, which once set his brain on fire, appears characterless. The classical features, exquisitely moulded, lack power. The sweet mouth has a wan droop, as if sighing for ungranted kisses.

"Sometimes, Carol," she says at last, "I fancy you are tiring of me." She only speaks for him to contradict.

"My darling, what an absurd notion to get into that pretty little head of yours! Occasionally it is a little slow here for us both."

"That is only since you grew nervous. Of course, the days are long if you will stay indoors doing nothing."

"Yes, you are quite right," he answers, somewhat to Eleanor's surprise. "It *is* foolish, and unnecessary. Now you won't grumble, my pet, if I go for a long day's sport to-morrow. It will do me all the good in the world, some excitement and exercise. I have been getting dreadfully grumpy and cross."

"How early shall you start?"

"Oh, first thing. I assure you, Eleanor, I am quite looking forward to it. I can't have been very well lately, and that accounts for my apparent prostration and uncalled-for nervousness. There is nothing really to fear, and you can make your mind quite easy about me."

These reassuring words delight Eleanor, for as long as Carol is happy and satisfied, her joy is intense.

As they talk Quamina is crouching under the broad steps that lead down from the verandah; her eyes gaze in the direction of that mysterious rock hidden from sight.

She wonders if the devil has yet come for the Sahib's message. Her soul is torn by curiosity and fear. She longs to know, and if the strange letter still lies in the crevice untouched, herself to break the seal and try to decipher the words.

It is a tremendous temptation, yet as she rises with a bold resolve and creeps along the moonlit path, she suffers mortal dread, momentarily expecting to encounter some supernatural apparition. She turns out of sight of the bungalow, with its cheerful lights, and reaches the rock, on which the moonbeams play. A ray of light lies across the crevice in which the Sahib deposited his epistle.

With set teeth, and frantically beating heart, Quamina forces her skinny arm into the hole, murmuring prayers as she gropes and fumbles.

Then staggers back with a low moan, and flees from the unholy spot. The devil has been! The letter is *gone!*

(To be continued.)

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ALCOHOLISM AND OBESITY.

It is often rashly asserted that drunkenness is uncommon on the European Continent, and that, in particular, it is a rare vice in France. Certain medical therapeutists and specialistic scientists have, however, recently furnished some suggestive statistics which flatly contradict the cherished beliefs of those who have persistently proclaimed the sobriety of the French people. Dr. Lancereaux, at the French Academy of Medicine, having made a special study of the subject, declares that in his extensive hospital practice out of twenty patients ten are, on an average, suffering from some form of alcoholic poisoning—women being responsible for a large proportion of the enormous consumption of alcohol thus indicated. The learned doctor sums up the results on the population at large as representing a mortality greater than that caused by the greatest epidemics, the ruin of labour, and—what is already startlingly evident in France—the steady diminution of the very population of the country. Other authorities, again, assert that with the annual increase in the consumption of spirits, to the extent of nearly 500,000 gallons in various liquors, there has been a corresponding increase of corpulence. This appears to make alcohol responsible for the troublesome and sometimes dangerous increase of unhealthy adipose tissue on the strength of the somewhat slipshod theory of the affinity of alcohol for oxygen in the system. It is certainly worthy of note that some of the most eminent authorities on the Continent and in America absolutely debar the corpulent from drinking alcohol in any shape or form, while on the other hand one of the most prominent and successful specialists in England boldly and flatly contradicts, on this point, his professional brethren. He permits those undergoing his treatment to drink the spirits of their choice—although he does not advocate the use of these beverages. The result of his experiments is that he can reduce a person's weight from 3lb. to 6lb. in a week, although the patient may drink alcohol even to excess; nor will any extra decrease in weight be experienced by a restriction of the amount of drink consumed. His aim is to attack corpulence at its very root, and to achieve this he does not approve of such a drastic measure as the sudden and indiscriminate stoppage of a person's accustomed spirituous drink; for there are many who have so habitually used themselves to their "dram" that its prohibition is unquestionably a great hardship, if not actually dangerous. Again, he takes exception to the action of the majority of specialists in dealing with obesity, in prescribing a limited diet. To this he takes exception on the very reasonable ground (to quote from his clever 256-paged book, entitled "Corpulency, and the Cure," by F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.), that with the reduction of fat by his process, the most unhealthy portion of this excess tissue, such as those which clog the vital organs, begin to waste first, and, as a consequence, the entire system becomes healthier within the first twenty-four hours of the treatment. Then immediately the patient begins to be exhilarated by such symptoms as the freedom of breathing, the stronger and steadier action of the heart, the feeling of lightness, the absence of the sense of oppression—each organ performing its duty with increased regularity. He finds himself aroused suddenly from a lethargic heaviness and morbid drowsiness which have probably lasted for years; he feels, as it were, born anew, and instantly becomes more active and buoyant, both in body and mind—all of which pleasurable sensations are naturally accompanied by an increase of appetite. It is not necessary to be a scientist or a medical expert to adopt the common sense view of these matters. "Would you, then," argues Mr. Russell, "in the case of a person who for years, perhaps, has never known what a healthy appetite means, deprive him of food when Nature appealingly holds forth her hands, literally begging for it? No! those who reduce fat by starvation pay for their folly at usurers' interest when meeting the bills drawn against them on the Bank of Longevity. Let other specialists prescribe this; I will not countenance it," says Mr. Russell. Notwithstanding the increased amount of food taken daily, the weight, under the operation of his system, is steadily reduced, to which unerring testimony is given by the weighing-machine. The painstaking research and the marvellous success of the author of the above-named work justify us in arriving at the conclusion that his system may be followed with absolute confidence. His success is all the more remarkable because the whole secret consists in the use of a few herbal roots and a simple vegetable acid. We believe it is the only system of reducing obesity—and it is a very pleasant system—which is certain in its results and brings no after-penalties. We commend his book to our readers. It may be obtained post free by sending six penny stamps to Mr. Russell at the address already given.—*Brighton Examiner.*

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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 381. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 18TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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EDITED BY ARTHUR PEARSON OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY

SHORT STORIES

No. 381.] For the Week ending April 18th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

THE SORCERESS.

THE *calzada principal* in La Barca runs a meandering course easterly through the town to the *garita*. The houses on each side are the usual Mexican type, the more pretentious of some others of adobe, with barred windows and heavily doored *zaguan*, where the idle porter sits lazily, incessantly rolling and smoking his *cigarillo*, arousing himself sufficiently at times to salute a passer-by or to answer a question, and relapsing at once into his former dreary condition. Children imperfectly clothed play solemnly in the gutter; their dark-brown bodies, shining dully through the incrusting dirt, are proof against the darkening effect of the sun's rays; a solitary *lagartija* clings lizard-like to the kerb and feebly resists a boy's effort to goad him into action. The *sereno* leans sleepily against a corner in the shade, loosely holding his carbine, and muses on the unhappy lot of a policeman forced to keep up a semblance of watchfulness.

Suddenly, as a woman's figure appears in the street, there is a chorus of childish feet as they disappear panting with fright, in a dozen different directions. The porters, stirred into action, hurriedly close the doors and piously whisper an *ave*, the *sereno* draws himself erect, furtively crosses himself, and murmurs "*La bruja! Dois me guarde!*" as the woman passes. She moves quickly down the street, looking neither to the right nor to the left passing the *garita* where the solitary customs official likewise crosses himself and asks divine protection from the wiles of the sorceress.

Nevertheless, he follows the sinuous, graceful movement of the young woman and notes the perfection of face and figure, which appeals to him in spite of his persuasion that her beauty is of origin diabolic, and lent by Lucifer himself to snare men's souls. She wore a piece of dark green stuff, folded around her hips, and falling to the ankle; a jacket of red gauze clothed the upper part of her person, veiling her bosom, upon which lay a chain of gold in the form of a serpent. Her black hair, parted at the forehead and drawn back in two splendid tresses, intensified the pure white of her brow; her eyes, shaded by long lashes, were the greenish-black of obsidian. Continuing her walk to a small adobe house some hundred yards beyond the gate, she disappeared within the doorway. The customs official gave a sigh of relief and returned to his desk.

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Once within the house, she lost her firmness of bearing, tottered to the centre of the room, and sank in a heap on the rush mat. Her form suddenly grew rigid, her face took on the grey pallor of death; the eyes became set, and stared fixedly at the wall opposite; the golden serpent on her bosom seemed in the half light of the dying fire to writhe and twist, instinct with life.

At the fire sat a little shrivelled-up old man, brown and wrinkled, stirring with skinny claw the contents of an *olla*. Of her entrance he had taken no notice, continuing his employment as if waiting for her to speak. At length he looked round and sprang to his feet; a pallor almost as deep as her own overspread his face. "Maria!" he whispered; "Maria!" Meeting with no response, he hastily moved to the door, barred it, and, returning to his place by the fire, crouched down and shrouded his face in his arms.

Soon the woman's body lost its rigidity, her eyes turned towards the doubled-up figure of the old man and shone with such a basilisk glare that he moved uneasily; the eyelids drooped, and she sank back upon the floor apparently asleep: her respiration at first harsh and laboured, became quiet and regular.

The old man now raised his head for the first time, and fixed his bright, beady eyes on the woman's face.

"A prophecy," he said, "a prophecy! Let the high priest of the gods know their will!"

As if in response, the woman began an inarticulate murmur. Soon her voice rose to distinctness:

"The darkness of earth is in the temple; the altar of the fire-god is black with ashes, the serpent lies dead before Quetzalcoatl; the grinning skulls at the feet of Xipetotec mock the power that is gone forever; the snake-skin drum is beat in vain; the victim is slain; the sound of thunder fills the temple, the priests fall dead, and the foot of the white man desecrates the house of the gods."

Her voice fell, and, with a fluttering sigh, she awoke. The light of expectancy which had illuminated the old man's face gradually died out as the woman's words fell on his ears, and, at their conclusion, he seemed shrunken to half his size.

"'Tis false!" he said—"false! The power of the gods can never fail. For seven years have we awaited

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the sign, and to-morrow Xipe-totec, gladdened once more by the sight of blood on the sacrificial stone, will make answer to his children's prayers. Did you see the white stranger again to-day, Maria?" he asked.

"Yes; I have but now left him."

"And he will be in the *barranquilla* to-morrow at sunset?"

The woman's voice faltered as she answered: "Yes; if——"

"If!" hastily returned the old man; "if? What does this mean?"

"He will come if I send him word, but—but I cannot—oh, *papa mio*, don't ask it. Forego the sacrifice to Xipe-totec, and content the people with the sacred mask-dances."

He looked at her with astonishment: "Seven years have we waited, and the daughter of El Viejito, the high priest, asks that the sacrifice be omitted! What woman's whim is this?" he said fiercely. "Why should the god, upon whose awful power we must depend, be denied his due?"

"He loves me, father."

"Loves you! And if he did not, could he ever be lured within the reach of the Nagual priesthood? Suppose he does, he will pay the penalty of his folly."

The woman rose to her feet. "He shall not," she said firmly; "for I love him, and no priestly knife shall ever harm him. At first, I believed all you had taught me; believed that my duty to the gods made all things good, no matter how cruel and horrible they otherwise seem. But now I know better. The ancient religion shall die out and the worshippers perish from off the face of the earth ere harm shall come to him I love."

The fierce glitter in the old man's eyes gave way to a look of crafty cunning. "Well, well! so be it," he said; "the sacred dances must answer."

* * * * *

When the "Golden Ass"—as his La Barca neighbours unpleasantly called him—developed a taste for mural decorations, his case was a most serious one; the *casa pintada* was the result, and a most marvellous one it is. His zeal in the cause of art was intense, but not discriminating: primary colours alone seemed to fill the requirements; minor details of perspective, truth to nature, and the like, were absorbed in a wild hunger for colour, and plenty of it. Impossible landscapes and oddly constructed animals ran riot on the walls.

He is long since dead; but his house remains and made very comfortable engineering headquarters. In one of the least violent rooms, overlooking the miniature fountain in the *patio*, the engineer in charge, Vincent Colby, had his office. He was a good type of the English engineer; tall and well-built, he gave the impression of staying qualities rather than of muscular power. The warmth of a tropical sun had but slightly deepened a naturally fair complexion; his dark hair and good eyes, with a softness of intonation and engaging manner, stamped him at once with the Mexicans as *muy simpatico*, and revealed to them the possibility that all might not be *barbaros*, an impression unfortunately yet not unnaturally prevalent.

Just now Vincent was in an unpleasant frame of mind, and his musings ran somewhat as follows: "I may be an idiot, but I can't help it. Idiocy may be congenital or acquired—mine must be acquired, for, up-to-date, I've been reasonably conventional. The mater will rave, I know, when I take home a native wife; the sisters will make matters unpleasant for a day or two; and the governor will probably cut up rather rough. But I'm suited, they will have to be; if a man can't make his own choice when it comes to marrying, when can he? I've made mine—if she'll give me an answer on the seventh—why not the sixth or eighth, I don't know. I've asked her a dozen times in the last ten days, but it is always the same: she neither says yes nor no. It can't be coquetry, for she smiles sadly, yet with a wistful look which can mean but one thing."

Here a rattle of hoofs in the *patio* interrupted him, and he looked out to see the company's doctor dismount.

"Hello, doctor," he called out, "come in here; I want to talk to you. There's not a soul about the place, and I'm too lazy or nervous to work. Throw your saddle-bags over there on the table and have a drop of toddy. No? You don't usually let a good thing go by. What's up? Patients dying or getting well, or have you been rowing it again with the *padre* at Penjamo, because you differ as to the use of water? You're all wrong. Be satisfied to cure the poor beggars without lecturing them on the advantages of an occasional bath. To clean them is so radical a measure that you'll be run out of the country as a pernicious foreigner attempting to demolish a most cherished idea."

The doctor made no reply.

"Well, out with it. You needn't look at me like that."

"Vince, we've known each other as boys and men for a good many years——"

"All right; you always begin with gentle boyhood days when you've anything particularly unpleasant to say. But I suppose I must submit. I don't know what's up, but if it's serious as you look, old man, it's pretty bad."

"It's serious or not, as you choose to make it," answered the doctor. "An ambition to acquire the Mixe language may be a laudable one; folklore, ancient religion, and all that sort of rubbish learned on the spot are a kind of relief in this hot, dusty hole, though I don't care for it myself. Even Nagualism and other high-class sorcery may be amusing to you, if not to me. But when you get spoony on the sorceress herself, it's time for some one to open your eyes."

"Sorceress!" responded the other. "What rot you are talking. That sort of thing is played out in these days."

"I tell you it isn't played out," rejoined the doctor; "the natives keep it dark and say there's nothing in it, but half the Indians in this town hold to the old faith, and every time a child is baptised, they set up a little incantation business on the sly, and do the trick over again in their own way, with an extra curse or two on the white man and his god. I scared the story out of old Sebastiano, and got the whole programme. The Eleusinian mysteries aren't in it with this accursed Nagualism, which includes human sacrifices and other pleasant little ceremonies which, though no doubt highly gratifying to the worshippers, must be somewhat unpleasant to the victim, I fancy. El Viejito is the high priest, and Maria Condelaria is his daughter. They are a dangerous, fanatical lot, and if you'll take my advice, you'll leave them alone. They bitterly hate the whole white race, and an offering from it is not only an act distinctly pleasant in itself, but is a religious duty as well. The government has only been partly successful in keeping it down. They practise their devilish rites once too often, and some one disappears."

To hear one's best beloved spoken of as a sorceress, and as one to whom wading in human gore was a usual and agreeable employment, was, to say the least,

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irritating; but the doctor's earnestness and evident belief in what he had said roused in Vincent a strong desire to laugh.

"You've been imposed upon, old man," he said. "Haven't you learned yet that the one delight of the native is to impose on the credulous with creepy stories? Moreover, you have allowed yourself to listen to gossip about the woman whom I intend to marry."

"Marry! My God!"

"Yes, marry—if she'll have me. I intended speaking of it when you commenced with your infernal nonsense. It's my affair anyhow, and if I'm satisfied, you can't complain."

To be told, even indirectly, to mind one's own business is particularly hard when one has tried to do a friend a kindness, so the doctor left the room offended at the manner in which his efforts had been received.

* * * * *

The sun was low in the west on the following afternoon when the doctor rode into the *patio* of the *casa pintada*. His progress through the town had been delayed.

A nameless fear had oppressed him and could not be shaken off. He went hastily to Vincent's room, but found it vacant. He was about to call a servant and inquire as to the whereabouts of his friend, when he saw a small scrap of paper on the floor. Idly picking it up, he read what aroused again his fears of the previous evening. In green ink, on paper none too clean, with v's and b's used interchangeably and double ll doing service for y, was written:

"Meet me in the Barranquilla de Hornos at sunset.—Maria."

Hastily calling for Julio, he was told Vincent had left at five. Julio had been ordered to unsaddle his own horse as his services would not be required. Returning to his room, the doctor consoled himself with the idea that although a tryst ten miles away was unusual, danger was not necessarily impending; the roads were fairly free from bad characters, and a lonesome ride was probably the worst to be expected.

He had brought himself to this state of mind when a woman staggered into the room.

"Save him! Save him, doctor!" she cried! "save him!"

Her hair fell in a tangled mass about her face, her clothing was torn and disarranged, and her wrists cut and bleeding. He recognised Maria, but her presence made the meaning of what he had read unintelligible.

"I refused to send for him," she continued hastily, "so they bound me in the *casita* and sent him a message in my name. They left me powerless, as they supposed, but I escaped."

"They? Who are they?"

"The priests of the Nagual; they who cling to the old faith, and who would sacrifice on their altar the man I love. Ah! doctor, make haste or we shall be too late; an hour at most is all we have."

Ordering Julio to follow him with the horses, the doctor made his way to the barracks.

Don Juan Gomez, captain in the Fourth, was a model cavalry officer and a warm friend of the engineer. The doctor had scarcely commenced his story, when Don Juan gave a brief order to his orderly at the door. A bugle call rang out, a clatter of hoofs on the pavement and the rattle of sabre and carbine in answer gave proof of the discipline of the troop. A sergeant entered and saluted.

"Listo, señor. A caballo, doctor!"

With Maria as guide, they dashed out into the night. In the service of a friend, Juan Gomez spared neither man nor beast. The breath of the horses came hard and fast, and spur was freely used before Maria said: "The entrance is between the two boulders to the right of the stunted pine."

* * * * *

Sunset found Vincent in the *barranquilla*. He had given no thought to the strangeness of such a place of meeting; he was to see again the woman he loved, and that was sufficient. No idea of danger had presented itself. Strong and well armed, he was confident of his ability to take care of himself. The place was dark and dismal, and he was too absorbed in his own fancies to note even casually his surroundings.

The trail had narrowed to barely a sufficient width for his horse, when he saw three men approaching on foot. They stood aside as he came up, and, as he attempted to pass, one seized him by the foot and threw him out of the saddle. Before he recovered from the shock, he was pinioned, blindfolded and helpless. He felt himself lifted up, carried some little distance, and placed on the ground again.

He remained thus for an hour or more, when the bandage was removed from his eyes. He had felt no especial fear at his treatment, believing it to be a question of a small ransom and liberty as soon as he could communicate with his friends. He opened his eyes, and with the first glance round, all idea of liberty by purchase departed at once. As his eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness, he saw he was in a cave-temple. On his right was a wooden idol, standing on a low stool. It was black and shining, as if charred and polished; its look was grim, and it had a wrinkled forehead, and broad, staring eyes. He had read of the Black King, but now saw himself face to face with him. On the left was a coiled serpent, with head erect, shining eyes of jet, and fancifully painted scales, which he knew represented Quetzalcoatl. Immediately before him stood Xipe-totec, "the flayer of men," the representative of all that was vile and horrible in the hideous cult whose victim he was. In front of the idol stood the sacrificial stone, humped in the centre, the better to present to the knife the chest of the victim.

His heart sank within him as he read his awful position in the signs around him. The wealth of the world would not save his life from the fanatical faithful of the Nagual sect. But last night he had declared the practice of their rites obsolete; now he had full proof of his error, and was about to pay the penalty.

By this time the cavern had filled with people. Half-naked priests began a low chant in a minor key, circling in front of the idols and swinging terra-cotta censers, from which were emitted the pungent fumes of copal.

The movement became faster, their voices rose in their excitement, while, in their frenzy, they gashed themselves with knives until the blood flowed freely. Seizing Vincent, they placed him, face upward, on the sacrificial stone.

The high priest stepped forward to the side of the victim. Raising his knife of green obsidian above his head, he began: "Xipe-totec, the all powerful——"

A woman's shriek rang out, a flying form reached the altar as the knife descended, and a roar of musketry reverberated through the cavern.

A woman lay dead at the side of the sacrificial stone, on which rested the body of a man, an obsidian knife driven home in his heart.

Edwin Hall Warner.

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The Wooing of Madeleine

Lucien Barthelemy was what the world commonly calls an eccentric man. While he didn't affect to despise ordinary people, yet he seemed to have no desire to mingle with them, no doubt considering himself better company. Said one of his friends of him:

"I can't exactly say that his presence among us is depressing, yet the truth is we don't amuse ourselves so much when he is with us. He weighs upon our spirits. Not that he says anything unpleasant, far from it; but still, in spite of efforts to the contrary, we are not quite ourselves when Lucien is with us. His wine is always two-thirds water, he orders only one dish, he doesn't use tobacco in any form, he has an aversion to sport—doesn't want to kill anything, he says.

"Nevertheless, he is not a bad fellow. He can laugh when he chooses, especially when there are any children about. He prefers their society; he puts himself on their level.

"Lack of confidence in himself? Oh, no, he has passed his medical examination, he has a wonderful knowledge of books, and always has a book thrust into some one of his pockets; but he never reads when in company, for he is a deep student of human nature, so much so that he seems to have been acquainted with everyone in the world when he came into it, and be merely meeting you again when you are first presented to him, for without any useless preliminaries he at once chooses a topic of conversation which is interesting to you.

"I can't tell you," continued this friend, "what Lucien's religion is. He never goes to church, and yet he and the parson are the best of friends. Only once was he ever at church. It was a mournful occasion, the death of his mother. Everyone was in tears excepting Lucien, yet he loved his mother dearly. In the last year of her life she had not been able to walk. Lucien had carried her about in the open air for hours every day.

"You know he is superbly built, and has the strength of a giant, and had amused her as she lay in his arms like a child by telling her fairy and other stories with a grace and delicate pathos that would have made a publisher's fortune if the stories could have been taken down by a stenographer. At times she would fall asleep. Then he would lay her down on a bench, sit down beside her, and draw forth the ever present-book.

"His mother was a woman of strong character, and at her request her son gave her due notice of approaching death. The entire night preceding her dissolution Lucien sat alone by her bedside. This was as she desired. Everyone else was sent to bed.

"I have often asked myself what they talked about on that last night, which must have been a long one, and at the end of which Mrs. Barthelemy passed away gently, quietly, peacefully, without a pain or a pang, her son's hand clasped in hers. No; the parson was not called in, but he had dined with Lucien the day previous at the bedside of the sick woman. When, a few weeks later, I spoke to Lucien in admiration of this beautiful passing away of his mother, he replied in a low voice:

"'Everyone can die in the same way; all that is necessary is to give five minutes' thought to death every day of one's life.'

"'And do you think that we shall meet again?' I asked.

"'There can be no doubt of it,' he replied.

"'Where? How? In what form?' I queried.

"'I don't know,' was his answer, 'and the reason why I don't know is because it is no affair of mine.'

"'Then why do you affirm that we shall meet again?'

"'Because I know we shall,' he said calmly."

Lucien was one of those men who, while not arguing to the point, are none the less convincing.

"Was it at all surprising then," continued this friend of Barthelemy's, "that Lucien should have peculiar notions on the subject of marriage? I think not. Anyhow, he did have such notions. I have it from his own lips. Said he to me one day:

"'I want to impress upon your mind firmly that I am not one of those who think that in a civilisation like ours perpetual bonds should be laid upon a human being; no matter with what solemnity the contract may have been entered into. Fate has not the power to modify the past, and man has no right to speak for the future.

"'Let signatures support what they are set under in commercial transactions; but this cannot be so in moral compacts, subject as they are both to the variability of

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our ideas and our feelings. These compacts must be purely voluntary, and it is the soul's inalienable right to take possession of itself again when it discovers that either under duress or undue influence it surrendered unwisely.

"'Marriage is purely a moral compact into which the man, generally speaking, goes knowingly, with full knowledge of what he is doing, but the woman gropingly, blindly. In my opinion, the man alone is entitled to be called a contracting party.

"'When once the marriage has been solemnised,' continued Lucien, 'it devolves upon the man by every possible means to win over to him and incorporate into his existence this outside party of whom he often gets possession by surprise, by ruse, by deceit; and his own fault is it if he fails to accomplish this, for, having had perfect liberty to do so, he should, before asking her to become his wife, have made a close study of the young girl and given her up if he deemed her unfit for or unworthy of him.

"'Let us hope that the time is close at hand when fathers and mothers will prepare their children differently for marriage, so that the contracting parties will know beforehand what a magnificent partnership they have it in their power to enter into by simply pronouncing the word "Yes."

"'Civilisation, I grieve to say, has not gone as far as this. It will be necessary for women to learn many things which will be kept from them a long time yet. There will be no true marriages until choice on the part of both shall be absolutely free, and there shall be full and complete knowledge in both of reciprocal rights and duties. Until that day comes there is but one court competent to pass upon this question, and that is conscience.'"

Surely no one will wonder at it when told that Lucien Barthelemy's forty-fifth birthday found him still unmarried. Physically, Lucien was in the very bloom of manhood, his broad shoulders carrying a magnificent head, with a great wealth of curly brown hair thrown boldly back, while a full beard of a lighter tone ill concealed the placidity and sweetness of his smile.

His forehead indicated spirituality as his straight eyebrows denoted firmness, energy, obduracy, if necessary, in opinions as in actions; while his clear blue eyes beamed with mingled intelligence and kindness. This handsome face was set upon a chin of great beauty, which, like a pedestal, imparted an air of dignity and self-control to it, and held it up, so to speak, for the admiring and sympathetic glances of the looker-on to rest upon.

In spite of the few grey hairs which diligent search might have found in that thick fleece of brown, Lucien still looked the young man.

In studying his hands the skilled palm-reader would have discovered unmistakable signs pointing to that union of imagination and will of faith and reason, of love of the ideal and need of independence which is found in all men whose minds, whose consciences, whose souls are in open conflict with the world.

While yet in his forty-fifth year Lucien fell in love.

Largely from a sense of devotion to his mother's memory, Lucien had been accustomed from time to time to pay a visit to various old friends of hers, among them the Duclos, people in good circumstances and of considerable refinement. The daughter, Madeleine, when a mere child felt the personal charm of the "big gentleman," as she called Lucien, and play was abandoned and dolls hastily laid aside to enjoy the privilege of sitting at his feet.

Barthelemy had the power of holding enchained the attention of any listener. It was marvellous. His words had colouring, suppleness, strength, elasticity; they could be sombre, gay, luminous, solemn; as his voice delivered them they affected the audience like a Beethoven's symphony.

Lucien knew his power and delighted to exercise it. Upon no one was he more successful than upon Madeleine. The moment he opened his mouth she yielded to the fascination of his voice, sitting at his feet, with her glorious dark eyes riveted upon his face, as if a spell were upon her. There was manifestly a counter influence upon him, for his eyes never quitted her.

Madeleine felt the personal charm.

It was old Duclos' custom to adjourn to the garden when the weather was fair, in order to enjoy coffee and dessert in the open air, and here, with his magnificent head reaching almost to the roses above him, with the dark green of the bower sharpening the noble outlines of his face and heightening the almost womanlike delicacy of his colouring, Lucien, at Madeleine's request, was always ready to show the fertility of his fancy by inventing some quaint story in which everyday maidens and youths, fairy mothers, and obedient spirits were brought into delightful contingency. Madeleine never failed to reward the story-teller by setting half-a-dozen kisses upon his bearded cheek.

One evening as he wrapped his arm round this child and drew her towards him, he suddenly felt a deep blush mantling his face, and a strange clogging of his heart's action. Madeleine was no longer a child, she was a woman. Lucien's arm dropped by his side, and he drew away from her. He could not tell why, he only knew that he was all in a tremble, and for the first time

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in his life his mind grew dim and shadowy, and his words slipped away from him.

In a few moments he rose and hurried away on some pretence or other, slinking out of his friend's house with a feeling of shame that both bewildered and terrified him. But she was beside him, her soft voice was murmuring in his ear, her arm was about his neck, he could not escape her. No book was obstruse enough, no author profound enough, to stay her steps, to stop her at the threshold of his library.

She crossed it, she smiled upon him, she spoke to him in a voice of entrancing sweetness; she sat down; she made herself at home. He watched her, listened to her with mingled bliss and wonder. She was but the Madeleine of his imagination, but she was just as soft and gentle and lovable as the real Madeleine whom he had quitted in the bower of Duclos garden a few hours before.

Madeleine's parents were delighted with the discovery of Lucien's affection for the daughter. True, she was yet too young to marry; just verging, as she was, towards sixteen; but her beauty was unfolding like a flower, and while its steady increase carried joy to Lucien's heart it kept Madeleine's mother busy lengthening skirts and enlarging sleeves and corsages.

"But," laughed the mother, "Lucien is such a sensible man, so unlike other men. He can easily wait a year for our dear child."

Madeleine was not tall. At first glance one might have been inclined to use that vulgar but really technical term, dumpy. Very small and shapely hands and feet, black hair, naturally wavy, black eyebrows, almost meeting above the nose, which had the gentlest of upwards tilts; large eyes, gloriously deep and dark, with the bistre tone above them, and the pearl-tint below; cheeks rosy red and teeth as white as almonds—such was this child-woman.

Place some red roses in these black tresses, wrap a lace mantilla about that face, set a fan in motion in one of those hands, and drape that round but flexible form with a shortened skirt, and you would have an Andalusian.

Madeleine was the daughter of her mother. If you had gone far enough back, you would have found one of her ancestors among the builders of the Alhambra, possibly even breathing beneath its roof. It was rich blood, therefore, of the colour of the melted coral, which coursed through her veins. And yet a close observer would have noted the changes which the loss of the Southern sun had wrought in this transplanted type.

You would have an Andalusian.

The wedding-day came on apace. It so happened that a few weeks before the appointed day an Italian opera troupe began a series of performances in the town. Madeleine was passionately fond of music, and with her intended's knowledge and consent, in fact, sometimes in his company, she attended every representation.

Lucien noted how the singing stirred her very soul, and was gratified by the keen enjoyment she drew from it. The tenor singer, Angelo Liverino, a strikingly handsome young man, who walked the stage like an Apollo and sang with the deep feeling of an Orphéus, soon became the rage of the town.

Petted and *féted* by everyone, and entertained by the best families, he set a hundred hearts aflame on his triumphal course, but seemed to take no hurt himself until he met Madeleine. In an instant the warm souls flashed together, the two people of the south land met after long years of separation.

One evening, when Lucien entered the home of his affianced, he found Mrs. Duclos lying senseless on the floor and her husband kneeling beside her, himself but little this side of dementia. Madeleine had eloped with Angelo Liverino.

It had only struck nine when Lucien parted with Mr. and Mrs. Duclos, and yet it was past midnight when he presented himself at his apartments. Here were three whole hours absolutely cut out of his lifetime. During this time he had been dead to himself, and he only came back to life when his servant, in response to his knock, opened the door and called him by name. Then he remembered who he was and what had happened to him.

He staggered to a chair, and asked for water. He was burning up with thirst.

His servant begged for permission to summon a physician, but Lucien shook his head and directed him to go to bed. The man reluctantly obeyed after he had vainly tried to persuade his master to remove his clothes and go to rest first himself.

Nature is more merciful than men give her credit for. Like murderous blows, great agonies so dull sensibility that little pain is felt. The terrible hurt mercifully brings unconsciousness with it. Some sorrows are so heavy that the sufferer is crushed beneath the load. He cannot even cry out; a chill almost of death steals over

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him. He is dead, for real death could not be so horrible.

When Lucien's servant re-entered his room the next morning, he was startled to find his master sitting with his clothes on, just as he had left him. He had not stirred from the chair into which he had fallen upon his return home after those three hours of mad pursuit, and then, as the man drew the curtain aside and let the sun's rays into the room, he uttered a stifled cry of horror, for great flecks of grey streaked that glorious head of hair.

In a single night grief had wrought this devastation. In a few brief hours a speechless woe had set its ghastly finger-marks upon this bright page of humanity. Nor did despair stop there. In a few weeks the change was complete; that luxuriant growth of hair—crown of perfect manhood—was silvered to its very roots.

But gradually the paroxysm spent its force, and like came to cure like when Lucien looked upon the terrible woe now nested in that little home, and listened to the lamentations of that old couple so cruelly deserted.

In a few days letters come from Madeleine, both to her parents and to Lucien, announcing her marriage to Angelo, and promising to return home in a few months, when they had quieted down and had come to look upon her action in a calm and reasonable way, which, of course, was now impossible.

To Lucien she wrote as follows:

Oh, Lucien, dear master, will you ever be able to forgive your poor slave for thus deserting you? Ah, yes, I loved you; but I feared you, for, thought I, if his power is so great over me now, what will it be when I am his wife?

You know what a wild and wilful child I am. I could not bear to think of chains, even though my love for my master was so great. I trembled when I pictured myself your wife. My woman's soul longed to try its wings, not to have them tied. Dear master, you are not weak and mortal, you would not be led by a woman.

The world is so beautiful, and I have not seen it yet. Great and generous soul, bear with me. I could not be satisfied with being a listener to the wonderful things that happen to the maidens of your stories—I wanted to be one of the maidens myself.

I tired of watching others dancing and feasting. I wanted to dance and feast myself. Comfort dear mother and father, oh, beloved master, with the music of your voice and the look of your noble countenance, and grieve not for the loss of one who was not worthy of you.

Lucien read and re-read this strange letter hour after hour, day after day. It had a twofold influence upon him, alternately depressing and exciting him, but in the end the feeling that took possession of his soul was a deep and indescribable indignation.

To think that the woman whom he had loved with a devotion that went beyond thought should have been so ready to abandon him for such a vain and soulless creature, puffed up with the senseless admiration showered upon him by morbid-minded women. To think that this jack-a-dandy should have been so easily able to lead her away.

Even by his friends, Liverino was admitted to be stupid and vulgar, and yet she had found him sublime; she had fallen in love with this singing machine like a child with the soft tinkle of a music-box. She had found her ideal in this pretty-faced minstrel; she had given up all the world for him, relinquishing all other love for the love that an opera queen gets from the leading man. Faugh!

And yet, strange to say, resolve as Lucien might to curse this pretty child, he could not bring himself to it. The words died on his lips so softly that they seemed more like a blessing than a curse.

A hundred times he sat down and took up his pen to write, but the hot hate cooled ere it reached the quill's point. He could distil the venom of despised love, but he could not make it flow out in black and bitter lines.

Had she ever pledged herself to him? In spite of her seeming willingness, in spite of the solemn compact entered into for her by her parents, had she really been transferred to him? Had any ear heard the divine acquiescence when God's blessing had been invoked upon the betrothal?

"I was a man of forty-five," argued Lucien, "when I swore to cherish and protect her. For many years I had been a man of the world; I had complete knowledge of its social and moral responsibilities. I knew what I was doing. I was the only one betrothed."

But willing in the end as Lucien was to extend a full pardon to Madeleine, he could not bring himself to forgive Liverino, who had lured Madeleine away by making her believe that she should be his Juliet, his Rosina, his Desdemona, not in mimic show, not in pleasing counterfeit, but in glorious reality.

"I shall follow him and kill him!" exclaimed Barthelemy through his clenched teeth. "To let such a thief get away with his plunder would make me accessory after the fact."

A few weeks sufficed Lucien to put his affairs in order, to take the daughter's place and walk beside Mr. Duclos, as the old father, bowed in sorrow and despair, followed his wife's remains to their last resting place—for Mrs. Duclos had never raised her head after Madeleine's flight—and to execute his last will and testament, for Lucien realised to its fullest extent the risk he would take when he entered the land of the stiletto, bent upon executing a vengeance that must betray itself in every motion, in every glance.

It would be very possible that Angelo should know quite as well how to guard his plunder as he did to remove it from under the very eyes of the lover. And yet, how would he ever know that Lucien Barthelemy was standing in front of him, about to raise an avenging arm to strike him down with all the force of a thunderbolt?

His own mother would have had difficulty to see in this pale, smooth-faced, white-haired man, the specimen of glorious manhood she had left behind her. So long as Madeleine did not hear his voice, she, too, would never dream that this was the man she had so deeply wronged, so lightly abandoned.

She had only known the bearded face; she had no knowledge of the countenance that lay beneath the beard. His plan was, therefore, to follow boldly after the fugitives without meditating any further disguise than that which nature had provided for him.

But it proved to be no easy task to come upon a trace of them. Upon returning to Italy, Liverino had travelled under an assumed name, and a month had elapsed before Lucien was enabled to discover his whereabouts, but his zeal and intelligence triumphed at last.

Angelo and Madeleine were traced from Venice to Florence, from Florence to Rome, and from Rome to Naples. Here they disappeared so completely that Lucien was quite persuaded that they had left the city by water, probably taking passage for America.

By this time the new scenes and new faces, the glory of Italian skies, and the melody of the Italian tongue

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had begun to work a change in Lucien. Strange fate had led him into a land that was serving to aggravate rather than cure his malady, for at times, with a love that knew no bounds, he yearned for the dark-eyed child who had been snatched away from him, and who, now in his pilgrimage through this south land, would fit so delightfully in his poet's and scholar's heart.

While wandering about the streets one evening, peering into every face, measuring every form that passed him, he strolled into a wine shop and sat down at one of the tables, when suddenly a smothered cry of rage escaped his lips.

Angelo Liverino had entered the place in company with several friends and taken seats at another table. The hour was late. Angelo and his companions, although already inflamed with liquor, summoned the keeper of the wine shop and noisily demanded to be served at once. The man, apparently afraid lest the good name of his place should suffer from the outbreak of a midnight brawl, vainly endeavoured to quiet them, and consented at last to furnish them with wines.

In spite of the intreaties of the proprietor, the revellers went from bad to worse, and it seemed as if their wrangling must soon bring about a descent of the police agents. One Pietro, with inflamed visage and wild tongue, summoned Angelo to sing. Angelo refused, whereupon Pietro fell foul of him like a fiend.

In an instant the polished blade of Angelo's stiletto flashed in the light. The tumult was deafening. The roar of angry voices and the shuffling and stamping of feet mingled with the crash and rattle of overturned furniture. The tallest and sturdiest of the group, one Stephano, now threw himself upon Angelo, and after a brief struggle succeeded in wrenching the stiletto from his hand.

Fearing that blood was about to be shed, and being unwilling to be called as a witness to a midnight brawl, Lucien hastily retreated to a side-door with intent to escape, but a new outburst of violence from the brawlers caused him to look back.

Pietro had flung himself like a madman upon Stephano, who, to save himself from a blow of a heavy cane, struck out with the stiletto, and Pietro staggered back with a groan. The next instant the police burst into the place and made prisoners of the brawlers.

While glancing listlessly over the columns of a morning journal a suppressed cry of amazement escaped from Lucien's lips as his eyes fell upon the heading: "A Midnight Brawl ends Disastrously—Angelo Liverino Slays One of his Companions."

Like a flash of lightning the truth burst upon Lucien; Pietro had been killed by Angelo's dagger, and the singer's companions had charged him with the killing of Stephano.

For a moment or so Barthelemy was as if suddenly stricken blind and speechless, but as the light came back to him again and he found that he could use his tongue, he started up and whispered to himself: "Great Heavens! Madeleine is mine again!"

But as he uttered these words he felt the blood rush into his face, so that it seemed as if it must burn its way out. It was the blush of shame. For how could Madeleine be his again unless he stood by and allowed an innocent man to be convicted of another's crime and to be thrust into a felon's cell on perjured evidence?

No; he had been dazed, bewildered for a moment by a vision as lovely as that which Mephisto has conjured up for Faust; but it had faded the very next instant, and in its stead he saw the figure of a young woman in mean attire, bowed in grief, abandoned by the whole world, crushed by misfortune as dire as it was undeserved—the wife of a felon.

No; Angelo must be saved, if not for his own sake, at least for Madeleine's. Lucien was not long in reaching this conclusion, and that very day he visited the criminal court, and ascertained when Angelo would be brought to trial.

At the end of the week the singer, more dead than alive, in dread of the terrible fate hanging over him, was called upon to prove his innocence of the crime of slaying Pietro.

As Lucien entered the court-room, his eyes fell upon Madeleine seated on one of the benches, and he shuddered at the sight—so pale, so ill-clad, so utterly wretched and forlorn she looked, sitting there alone, with the gaze of the idle crowd fixed upon her.

The hearing was brief, for the public prosecutor, with the perjured evidence of Angelo's companions, had little difficulty in making out his case. Even the proprietor of the wine shop was quite positive that it was Angelo who had dealt the fatal blow.

The man was willing to swear that he had seen Angelo draw the stiletto from his breast and raise it in the air to strike Pietro.

Suddenly there was a commotion in the crowd of idlers and beggars which filled the wooden bench. A tall, well-formed man, with his thick white hair thrown back from his broad brow, and his clean-shaven face wearing the pallor of a sedulous scholar, approached the railing and conferred in a whisper with the attorney of the accused.

"One moment, your Honour," cried the lawyer, turning hastily about, "we have another witness for the accused."

A deathlike silence came upon the room.

"A gentleman, your Honour," continued the lawyer, "who happened to be present in the wine-shop when the murder took place will now give his evidence."

"Your name," asked the attorney, as the stranger was conducted into the witness-box.

"Lucien Barthelemy."

At these words a pallor as ashen as death's hue came over Angelo's face, and Madeleine, stark and speechless with mingled wonder and shame, sat with a stare almost of mania in her eyes.

"Let the witness be sworn upon the Holy Gospels," said the magistrate calmly, but Lucien pushed the book gently aside and shook his head. "Do you wish to make oath before God simply with uplifted hands?" inquired the magistrate.

"I am unwilling to make oath either before God or man," replied Lucien. "But I solemnly affirm that I will speak the truth."

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"Proceed," said the magistrate; "the jury may accept or reject the testimony as they see fit."

In a few words Lucien described the brawl and explained how Angelo's dagger had been wrenched from his hand by Stephano, and by him turned against Pietro: but the public prosecutor cautioned the jury that they should be careful how they allowed the testimony of an infidel to outweigh the overwhelming evidence already adduced, to say nothing of the previous ill-repute of the accused, who had on another occasion wounded a friend in a quarrel over some trivial subject.

It required but a few moments for the jury to bring in a verdict of guilty, upon hearing which Madeleine uttered a piercing cry of horror, and, throwing herself upon her knees, stretched out her hands towards the magistrate.

"Mercy, oh, mercy for him!" she pleaded, in tones that brought tears to the men's eyes, and caused the women to break out into convulsive sobbing.

"Ten years' penal servitude is the lowest penalty the law permits," said the magistrate solemnly, "but the prisoner may by good behaviour reduce the term to six years and a half."

Calling the prisoner's lawyer to him, Lucien handed him a sum of money, and, having requested him to look after Madeleine, who had been borne senseless from the court-room, he walked away.

Ten times he halted and asked himself why he should not go to Madeleine, why he should not act as her friend, her protector, her comforter. But suppose that beautiful child of the south land, now more beautiful than ever in her grief and loneliness, should throw her fair form into his arms, ask him to forgive, forget, and take her back, would he be able to withstand the terrible temptation?

True, 'Angelo was as good as dead to her, and a strange fate with an almost playful cruelty had again brought the beautiful creature within his grasp. Why should he not reach out for her?

But no. Had Angelo been a convicted criminal it might have been different. As it was, he had been wrongly convicted, and it was Lucien's duty to look after his rights as a man and a brother.

As Mr. Duclos announced his willingness to receive his daughter back under his roof again, Lucien dispatched his servant to conduct her thither, and then, with a sigh that came from the depth of his noble soul, he turned his face towards the home of his childhood, a delightful spot hallowed by the memory of his mother, with whose love fate seemed firmly resolved that Lucien must content himself.

"Human happiness," he murmured, "is like the scant supply of loaves and fishes. Nothing short of a miracle can make it go round and reach every hungry heart."

More than two years has gone by and no word, no sign of life, had come from the outer world to disturb this sweet serenity, Lucien felt that he had been forgotten, and rejoiced that it was so.

"Was it not all a mere carousal of the soul?" he asked himself. "Am I not slowly recovering my strength after a mad and senseless dissipation?"

Most of Lucien's visitors came to the back door; rare indeed was it that any hand was bold enough to lift the great knocker at the front door and disturb the stillness of the house. Hence it was that the figure of a woman approaching the front steps startled him one morning.

She was closely veiled. Upon reaching the steps she hesitated, turned away, and took the path leading round the house to the back door. Lucien, who had been watching her, gave a sigh of relief. But the next instant the servant threw open the door of the dining-room and the woman stood face to face with the master of the house.

"Well, madame, what may I do for you?"

For her only answer the woman lifted her veil.

"Great Heavens! Madeleine, is it you?"

"My dear master, it is I," cried the woman, throwing herself on her knees and reaching up for his hand.

"Lucien, oh Lucien," pleaded Madeleine, "father is dead. I'm all but beggared. My friends have closed their doors against me. Where should I go but to you?"

"But Angelo?" stammered Lucien.

"Is worse than dead to me," was the reply. "In a few months the truth of the murder became known, and he was pardoned, and returned to me, only to confess that he had another wife living; but I did not repulse him until the little fortune left me by my father was almost gone—thrown away by him in wild debauchery. Then I left him, and now I come to you, dear Lucien."

"Yes, yes," whispered Lucien, as he retraced a step or two and sank into a chair, "you did well, Madeleine. I'll care for you and your child—protect you——"

"No, no," exclaimed Madeleine, who, with little Alice, had followed Lucien up. "That will not be enough; that will not keep me alive. I must have more than that!" And then, as the master bountiful felt those beautiful arms once more entwined around his neck, his brain reeled for a moment, and it seemed as if joy must kill him.

When he came fully to himself that sweet erring child of the south land lay upon his breast. That autumn, when the air was sweet with the perfume of ripening fruit, Lucien and Madeleine were declared man and wife before the altar in the quaint old church across whose portal he had not passed since his mother's death.

Hundreds of hearts beat in joyful accord with theirs, and at last he felt the tide turning and saw the bread which he had cast upon the waters coming back to him again.

As the choir took up the glorious chant, "Veni Sanctus Spiritus," a voice of strange power and sweetness rang above all the others, so clear, so pure, so sweet, that gradually the other singers were hushed.

* * * *

Come, thou the soul's delicious guest.

Madeleine turned pale as she looked up to Lucien's face, but the smile met there chased every fear away and her great dark eyes filled with tears as she listened:

* * * *

Grant us in death to see Thy face.

And then the singer's voice trembled and died away, and he sank down gently into his chair. He was dead. Nor did the villagers think strange of it when Lucien and Madeleine made it a custom to visit his grave on the anniversaries of their wedding day and lay flowers upon it.

JULIUS RUTHERFORD.

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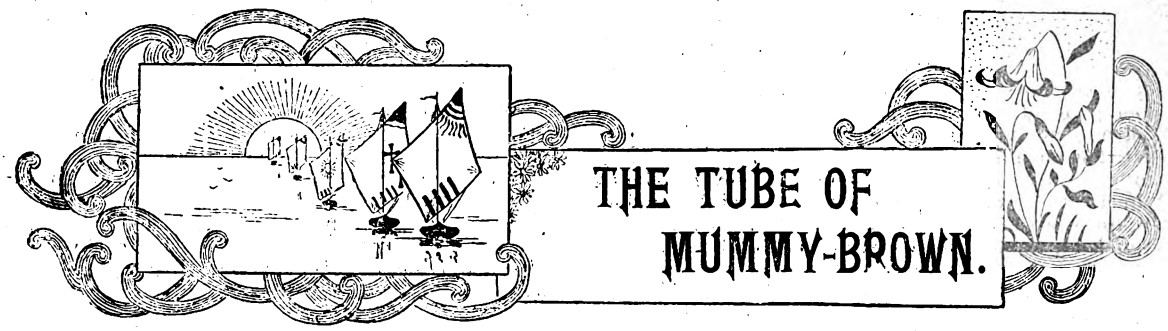

THE TUBE OF MUMMY-BROWN.

Richardson picked up the soft little cylinder and looked at it again.

"What did you call it?" he asked.

"Mummy-brown," replied Knowlton, taking a brush from between his lips to speak, and touching the canvas before him with it.

"Brown it undoubtedly is," remarked his friend; "but where does the mummy come in?"

"In the tube, my boy," returned the painter, half-closing his eyes, and putting his head on one side to observe the effect of his last stroke; "because it is made of pulverised Egyptian mummies, and it is one of the best colours we have."

Richardson put the tube back upon the much littered studio table, and whistled softly.

"Well," said he, "you may count me out if ever *I* become a painter, when it comes to using dead men's bodies to make pictures with. I'd be afraid they would come back again!"

"Nonsense," said Knowlton, laughing; "they are entirely too dead for anything of that sort, you may be sure, and if they are sensitive to feelings they never show it. Observe how I am using this tube, for instance, upon this Frenchman's coat; do you suppose any well-meaning Egyptian would like to have himself clothing a foreigner in any such manner *if* he knew it?"

"No, I suppose not. The colouring is rich, too," remarked Richardson, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets and surveying his friend's work with the eye of an uneducated critic, "though the same can't be said of the models, judging from appearances. And by the powers that be, Francis," he added suddenly, "you've made that tall fellow a very good likeness of yourself! Did you know it?"

Knowlton shrugged his shoulders. "I had an idea his face was something like mine," he answered; "but as that is a common trick of ours, I have not given it a second thought. What I am striving for is a good picture, not portraits, and I must realise something from it, too. By heavens, Richardson, it has come to be a case of dire necessity, and that's all there is to it!"

"Rent not paid?" asked his friend. "That's too bad—I've been there myself, and then it is a very uncomfortable thing to have hanging over one. As long as one can climb up and down the water-pipes, and thus avoid meeting the landlord on the stairs, life is made endurable, but with you, I suppose——"

"There isn't a water-pipe within twenty feet of my window. No, I must sell, or get out, so—the mummy-brown again, if you please!"

Richardson handed the paint to him once more, somewhat gingerly. "I can't help feeling, I'm dealing with a piece of a dead body," he said, colouring at Knowlton's pitying look; "and I should think you would do the same, believing, as you say you do, in transmigration, and re-incarnation, and all that sort of thing. Suppose, for instance, that you were painting this picture with a piece of your own father's body, when he was an Egyptian, ten thousand years ago!"

"Or, better still," returned Knowlton, squeezing a fresh supply of the paint out upon his palette, "my own old-time body, say!" As he spoke, he touched the paint with the tip of one finger, and a shiver, at the same time, passed over him, leaving him strangely pale and shaken.

"Yes, but —— hello, what's wrong?" exclaimed Richardson, noticing the change in his friend's face.

"Nothing—I don't know—a touch of vertigo, that's all," returned the painter confusedly; "I—what were you saying?"

"Only that if your supposition were so, the contact of two bodies—the new and the old—would make itself felt in the new."

"Yes," said Knowlton, smiling again and returning to his work; "but I do not believe in transmigration to that extent, my dear fellow. There *is* a line, you know, that even we fanatics have to draw, and I rather imagine it is somewhere near that point in this case. But to change the subject will you be at the club to-night as usual? If Mrs. McGwiginn should happen to take it into her good old head to ask me to pay or skip out, I'll have to realise on some of my personal property, and as I don't know the best places in town, I want you to steer me round. Won't object, will you?"

"Not in the least. My services are always at your disposal, and I'll be at the club about seven or eight. And now I must tear myself away; so until then——" and the end of the sentence was lost in the slight slam of the door as he went off. The artist listened until the echo of his friend's retreating footsteps had died into the murmurous silence of the great tenement in which he lived, and then going softly to the door himself, he turned the key in it. Coming back to the table, he drew his chair close up to it, and cast a furtive glance about the unhome-like room and into the deep shadows that lurked in the cobwebby corners. Then, with compressed lips and trembling hands, he drew the palette to him and gently pressed a finger into the little daub of mummy-brown still upon it.

A cold thrill shot up his arm, shaking the very nerve-centres of his body as it did so, and making him shudder again and again, even as he sank back into the chair half-unconscious. In another moment a sudden dusk filled the room, through which the familiar pieces of furniture and draperies seemed to lose their familiarity and to take new shapes and colours unto themselves. With staring eyes he strove to pierce the mist that half

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obscured his vision, and to shake off the weird feeling that had seized upon him; but gradually the lids drooped and closed, and to his distended nostrils there came, as he lost consciousness, a faint, sweet odour which even then he recognised—the smell of cedar-pitch and myrrh.

How long the terrible dream which followed lasted he could not know; but at last he woke to life again, and, struggling to his feet, he staggered to the window, threw it open, and let the faint breath of air stirring in the courtyard far below sweep up past him and into the dark room behind. The dusk was just falling over the city, and far, far below him he could hear the tenement's inhabitants of the first and second floors preparing their evening meal, singing and cursing by turn as the preparation pleased or displeased them. The night air cooled his fevered face and refreshed him, however, and the great beads of perspiration that had gathered on his forehead were gone, as he turned back to the room again.

"I am a fool!" he exclaimed impatiently, "and hungry, I dare say. No wonder I imagine things!" and catching up the worn soft hat that lay beside his tumbled bed, he hurried out into the hall and down the weary length of stairs to the street.

But as he closed the door, a small, heavy-bladed dirk upon the shelf directly over the spot where he had hastily placed the unfinished picture and its easel, jarred by his haste, whirled slowly round until it rested upon the very edge of the shelf, where it balanced to and fro and trembled in the little breeze that still puffed in at the open window.

* * * * *

Morgan, the favourite story-teller of the Bohemian Club, was talking as Richardson and the painter came in from their journey to the pawnshop, and the usual audience of interested listeners was collected about him.

"It may or may not have been humbug," he was saying, with a shrug of his shabby genteel shoulders, "but it was queer anyway you take it. I saw the man do it five times, too, and he failed but once."

"What do you call it—hypnotism?" asked a newcomer.

"I don't know; he simply says he sensitises the water and lets you call it what you like. First he puts the tumbler of plain hydrant water into one room, and he and the subject go into another. He makes a few passes—that is where the hypnotism comes in, I suppose—and once the man is under his control, the professor walks into the other room and stands with his hands over that tumbler of water for, perhaps, a minute, not uttering a sound. Then he sends some of us into the room with the sleeping subject, and he stays with the rest of the witnesses. When everything is ready, he tells one of them to take his penknife and thrust the blade carefully into the water. He does so, and we hear a muffled scream from the other room, as if the hypnotised man had felt the stab. This was repeated three times, and every time the subject screamed and twisted about in his chair as if in agony, while the knife remained in the water. As soon as it was removed, the pain apparently ceased, and he rested quietly again. I was sceptical, of course," concluded the talkative Morgan, "and said it was all chicanery; but after seeing the thing half-a-dozen times, I felt differently, and I must say that it is extremely peculiar, if not mysterious."

"What had the subject to say for himself when he came to?" asked Richardson, who had joined the group.

"Very little, except that some one had tried to stab him, and he succeeded three times in sticking a knife into his back, he thought."

"And did he know of the tumbler of water and its bearing on his hallucination?"

"No, he had been kept in still another room when first brought to the house, and had not seen or heard of the water."

"That is rather peculiar," said Richardson, thoughtfully. "I should like to have seen it myself." As he spoke, Knowlton, who had been talking with a fellow-painter at the other side of the smoke-filled room, started across it in answer to a beckoning nod of Richardson's. He had taken only a few steps, however, before he stopped suddenly and clutched convulsively at his breast, while an inhuman shriek, shrill and piercingly loud, burst from his lips. For a second he swayed there in the silence that followed—for every man in the room had heard the scream, above the talk and laughter, and had turned to see what it meant—and then his knees bent, and he fell heavily upon the roughly carpeted floor, an insensible mass. A young physician, who had been chatting near the fireplace, hurried forward as Richardson did the same, and, kneeling at the stricken man's feet, he tore open the shirt and put his hand over the heart.

"He is quiet dead, gentlemen," he said in a moment, in answer to the inquiring looks of those collected about them. Then he got to his feet and picked the lifeless artist carefully up, not one among the number saw the queer, white mark, just over the heart that came and went again like a very old scar.

The next morning, after hurried arrangements had been made for the funeral by Knowlton's Bohemian friends, Richardson had occasion to return to the studio.

The door was locked, but with a key of his own, he let himself in without disturbing the awe-stricken Mrs. McGwiginn. The body lay upon the bed, beneath a sheet, and the early morning light drifted in with an uncanny effect. The visitor went quietly to the bed, and, turning the sheet back from the face, looked down into the still features of his dead friend. Then he covered them again and moved away. As he passed the easel, which still stood where Knowlton had last placed it in his haste, he turned deadly pale, and caught the mantel for support.

"My God!" he cried, recoiling from the painting as if it were alive, and staring down at it with horror-filled eyes. Then he hurried past it, and threw open the shutters, letting a flood of light into the room. A stray bit of early sunshine fought its way through the grime-covered window and crept along the door to where the easel stood; and doing so it lighted upon a bright bit of metal that caught and reflected the light into Richardson's face.

Beneath the easel, as if hiding like a common murderer from justice, was the heavy dirk, driven into the uncarpeted floor an inch. Some night wind, more boisterous than the rest, had shaken it from the shelf, and, plunging downward to the floor, it had passed directly through the painting, not an eighth of an inch from the heart of the largest figure on the canvas—the man in the brown coat.

H. P. D.

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The Great Middlewick Bank Robbery.

SUMMARY.

Mr. Bryant, *Manager of Middlewick Bank.*	John Warren, *Old Watchman.*
Herbert Stewart, *Cashier.*	Jack Burton, *New Watchman—a detective in disguise.*
Frank Rutherford, *Book-keeper.*	Miss Denton, *Bryant's niece, and in love with Rutherford.*
Alfred Taylor, *Detective.*	

£20,000 is stolen from the Bank one night while John Warren is asleep. The only persons apparently aware of the key to the combination lock are Mr. Bryant and Mr. Stewart. Taylor is led to suspect Frank Rutherford of having obtained the key to the lock, and shadows him. An attempt is made on the strong room by three notorious burglars—Nash, King, and Birch—who know nothing about the previous robbery. The men are all captured, and Warren saves the life of one of the policemen.

CHAPTER XI.

The Two-Ounce Bottle.

MR. BRYANT had just finished breakfast, and comfortably settled himself in his easy-chair with his paper and cigar, when the door bell rang and the servant announced that a gentleman wished to see him.

The banker was surprised when the caller was shown in to find that he was Jack Burton, his "new watchman."

"I hardly expected you. Nothing wrong, I hope, at the bank?"

"No; but I've called to give you notice that I wish to leave."

The matter was not sufficiently serious to cause the banker much anxiety, but he inquired:

"But you have only been with me as watchman for a couple of nights?"

"Yes, but I've come to the conclusion I was never intended for a watchman in a bank. I can't tempt fate any longer."

This was a curious remark, and Mr. Bryant said:

"I do not understand you."

"You remember that row I had with a gang of burglars at the last place I was at?"

"Yes; and the manner in which you acquitted yourself there was your strongest recommendation to me."

"That would have been well enough if it had been the end of the confounded business, but the burglars were after me again last night."

"What!" demanded the astounded banker.

"Your bank was broken into again last night, and we had a high time with the gang; but they made a hash of it, for once."

"Great Heavens! Tell me all about it."

Burton gave the account. He adhered in the main to the facts which have already been related, but indulged in several variations in the course of the narrative. It was necessary to do this in order to gain the end which he had in view when calling upon Mr. Bryant.

The chief difference lay in the description of the part taken by the old watchman, John Warren. This was represented as most credible. Indeed, had that individual heard what Mr. Burton said about him he would have blushed to the top of his bald head.

"You see," said the visitor, "I have picked up several hints during the evening which satisfied me that something was wrong, so I got Warren to take his old place inside the bank while I watched outside."

"You had previously told Superintendent Dixon, you say?"

"Yes; it was he who helped me to catch the third burglar who was stationed on the outside—captured here on your own premises."

"Bless me! I never heard anything of it."

"Warren did his duty like a man. Constable Morton will tell you that if it had not been for Warren the criminal with whom he struggled would have finished him."

"And Warren kept awake did he?"

"He was about the most wide-awake man those burglars ever ran against," was the hearty reply of Burton.

"I am glad to hear that. Perhaps I was a little hasty with him. Perhaps, now you have decided to leave, I will try him again."

"I really think, sir, it would be the wisest possible step under the circumstances," observed the caller, who thus secured the object of his visit. "I will tell him, if you wish, so that he may rest to-day and be fresh for this evening."

"Thank you, and at the same time you might say that I wish to see him some time to-day. So you think these safe-breakers have taken a fancy to follow you round the country?"

"What better proof could I ask than what they have given?"

"Nonsense; but if your mind is made up, I'll not try to dissuade you. I'll pay you for the time you have served, and take care that your bravery of last night is not forgotten."

"I'm obliged to you, sir, but I can't accept anything. You see, it was really only one night, as Warren, and not I, watched the bank last night."

"But what are you going to do? Do you think of returning to London at once?"

"No, sir; I wish to keep away from there until I get over my trouble a bit—you understand," said Burton dejectedly. "I think I'll stay out my week at my lodgings, while I look out for some other work."

Over and over again Mr. Bryant kept asking about the occurrence of the night before. His caller gave the minutest particulars, even to the appearance of the tools and paraphernalia left by the visitors in the bank, which had been turned over to the authorities. He took good care that Warren's interests were not forgotten in these repeated narratives.

Finally nothing remained to be told. It was not more than half-past nine when Mr. Bryant announced his intention of at once starting for the bank.

"It's strange these men should make the attempt immediately after we had suffered so serious a loss, don't you think?"

"Yes, in a way I suppose it is," replied Burton, whose manner and conversation impressed his late employer as being considerably above his station in life. "I've never known such a thing happen before, but that's no reason why it shouldn't be done."

"You think these parties had heard nothing about the robbery the other night?"

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"I should say, sir, that the attempt itself shows they had not. You could ask for no better proof than that."

Mr. Bryant had risen to go, but sat down again, his face slightly flushed.

"How many men were concerned in this?"

"Three; and we have them all."

Burton had reasons of his own for making no reference to Roberts, whom he had not seen after he had first missed Taylor.

"That's fortunate; they will get good long sentences, I hope. How will this affect the investigation of the first robbery?"

Had the caller been Mr. Taylor, the bank manager would have plied him with numerous other questions, but he cut his inquiries short as he remembered that this man was only his new watchman.

"As the two affairs have evidently nothing to do with each other, *this* cannot affect *that* in any way."

Burton purposely spoke in a louder voice than usual. He was sure he was not mistaken in believing that a faint rustle on the stairs, as of a woman's dress, was made by someone attracted by his words.

"I should hope not," said Mr. Bryant, rising, "for there, after all, is the real task before us. As you will be staying in Middlewick for a bit, I shall see you again, but now I should like to get to the bank at once."

Twenty minutes later Burton presented himself at the door of the most highly praised man in Middlewick, for the story of old Warren's pluck and bravery of the night before was now in everyone's mouth. Constable Morton's compliments, if not wholly deserved, were yet partly true, for, as he had said, nothing but Warren's interference at the critical moment had saved his life. Bates, equally good-hearted, saw a chance of benefiting the old man, and was glad to do it, especially when Burton suggested that such a course was likely to secure his old situation again. So the heavy somnolence earlier in the evening was not made known to any outsiders.

For his own part, Burton was convinced that there was something about the strange drowsiness of the old man which had not yet been explained, and it was his desire to get to the bottom of the mystery which brought him to the watchman's house.

Opening the way for what he wished to say by a number of compliments on his bravery, Burton quickly came to the point.

"Warren, only three people know that when the burglars entered the bank last night—I mean only three people besides them—you were sound asleep, and had been for a long time. Those three are Bates, Morton, and myself."

"Who told you anything about it?" asked the watchman sullenly.

"Bates and Morton. But you needn't worry, we shall keep it to ourselves; we've agreed on that. What's more I'll get your place back for you, provided you do me a favour or two."

"Mr. Burton, there isn't anything I won't do for you if you'll do that," said Warren, in a trembling voice.

"I want you to tell me how it was you went to sleep last night, almost as soon as you entered the building."

"I'm sure I don't know," was the puzzled reply.

"And then on the night of the robbery you did the same thing."

"Yes, and that's what gits over me."

"And you have never done anything like it before."

"Well now, not exactly. I can't deny that now and then, when everything was quiet and looked all right, I have dozed for a few minutes in my chair, but never anything like on them two nights."

"But you told Mr. Bryant that that had been your custom for years."

"I shouldn't have said that," remarked the watchman like a schoolboy detected in a falsehood. "I was sort of dispirited, and disgusted and——"

"And what?"

"I was afeard if I owned that that was the only night I'd slept so sound some folks would think there was an understanding between the burglars and me. That's why I made out it was a common thing with me."

"Ah! the idea wasn't a bad one; but we haven't yet got at the reason why you slept so heavily. One thing you were awake all yesterday, but surely you were not so tired that you went off to sleep almost the moment you sat down."

Presented himself at the door.

"That puzzles me, but I can't explain it."

"Warren, has anybody forbidden you to talk about the robbery the other night?"

The abrupt question served to put the old watchman on his guard. He had lost sight of Mr. Bryant's injunction that he should not allow any one to talk to him about the burglary.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed in dismay. "I forgot all about that."

He then told what the banker had said to him.

Burton laughed and replied:

"Oh, that's all right. I had a talk with Mr. Bryant this morning. You need have no fear on that point."

The old watchman was only partly satisfied. If he was to regain his former place he could not be too careful about offending his employer. At the same time he was grateful to his visitor.

"Do you drink, Warren?"

"Never have in all my life."

"How long have you suffered from rheumatism?"

"It has been getting worse for more'n two years."

"What do you do for it?"

"Nothing very much. It's old age and can't be helped, I always think."

"Have you taken any medicine?"

"Yes," was the prompt response.

"Have you tried anything new lately?"

"On the afternoon of the robbery I took a new remedy."

"Did you apply it externally or internally?"

The old man was not quite clear as to the meaning of these terms. Burton explained them.

"I took it infernally; that is, I swallered it."

"How often—that is, on the day of the robbery?"

"Once, I think it was."

"When did you take the dose?"

"During the night of the robbery, after I had gone on watch."

"Why?—was the pain worse?"

"Then was the order."

"Whose? the doctor's?"

The old watchman was growing uneasy over this sharp questioning. He did not reply. His silence was of itself

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The old man was not quite clear as to the meaning of these terms.

an answer to Burton's inquiry, who held his curiosity well in hand.

"It's all right. You have gone so far, you need not fear telling me all."

"I would really rather say nothing more about it, Mr. Burton, for it's against rules, you know."

"But you've already broken those. Remember I'm to get your place back for you."

"Well, you do that first, and then I'll tell you the rest."

"I have already done it, my friend."

The watchman looked at his caller in wondering doubt.

"I arranged it all this morning before coming here. Mr. Bryant told me I might tell you, and also that he wants to see you some time to-day."

At that moment a knock sounded at the street door. Warren had told his wife to tell anyone who called to see him that he was busy.

The murmur of voices was heard in the hall. Then his wife dismissed the visitor, and came smiling into the room where the couple were sitting.

"Mr. Bryant has just sent word that he wants you to go back to work this evening, and will see you this afternoon."

It was a lucky interruption for Burton. He quietly smiled as the pleased face of the old man was turned towards him.

"Don't you believe me now, Warren?"

"Yes, there ain't any getting over *that*."

"If it was so easy for me to persuade Mr. Bryant to give

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you another trial, it will be just as easy for me to convince him he had better not. All I've got to do is to let him know the truth about last night, and to tell him what you have already said to me about the robbery."

It was a cruel advantage to take of the old man, but Jack Burton believed the end justified the means.

"But are you going to stop on with me?" asked Warren perplexedly.

"No. I called on Mr. Bryant, as I told you, this morning, said I wished to leave, and asked him to take you back. But never mind about that. Was it the doctor who ordered you to take that medicine for the rheumatism?"

"No."

"Who was it?"

"The man who gave the bottle to me."

"Of course; he took the place of a doctor. Where is the bottle?"

"I have it in the cupboard in the other room," replied Warren hesitatingly.

"Bring it to me; if you don't, Warren, I shall have you discharged again within half-an-hour."

The host, with a helpless air, left the room. He was gone but a minute when he came back with a two-ounce bottle in his hand, but Burton noticed it was empty.

"What's become of the medicine that was in it?"

"I took it all."

"When!"

"Last night, after going into the bank. I oughter took it before that, but forgot it."

"What directions did you receive when your friend prescribed for you?"

"I was to take a good dose of it that night, about ten o'clock, and so I did."

"Did it help your rheumatism?"

"I can't say as to that, for I don't 'spose I've give it a fair trial; you see, there wasn't much of it."

Jack Burton, while continuing his questioning, twisted out the cork and applied his nose to the neck of the bottle. He was not a chemist, but he knew enough about medicine to instantly detect the odour of laudanum.

There could be no doubt but that on the night of the robbery the old watchman had been deliberately drugged, and that later the thing had been repeated, though in the latter instance Warren himself was wholly responsible.

"Since you've finished the medicine, I will keep this bottle."

The old man made a weak protest, but his visitor quieted him and put the phial in his pocket.

"Did a certain person call at the bank on the night of the robbery and give you this medicine, with orders to take a big dose and tell no one about it."

"Yes, sir."

"Very well; now *who was the person?*"

The host looked his visitor straight in the face and said:

"I won't tell you his name, if I had to lose my situation again for it, Mr. Burton; I've already told you more than I oughter."

Jack Burton respected the old man's scruples too much to press him.

"Only one thing more, Warren, and I'll leave you in peace. Is this man connected with the bank?"

After a moment's pause the answer came:

"Yes; he has something to do with the bank."

"Thanks. And now good-bye and don't bother yourself about the affair. It will be all right."

The watchman seemed reassured by the words of his visitor, supplementing as they did the official notice of his restoration to his old post.

Disappointed in more than one respect, Burton went on his way thinking deeply, the only satisfaction he seemed to have gained from the interview being expressed in the muttered sentence:

"At any rate I have picked up a valuable clue from *him*."

And yet the wisest man may be mistaken.

CHAPTER XII.

What Happened at the Hotel.

Jack Burton was still confronted by the most puzzling problem that he had ever undertaken to solve.

Alfred Taylor, who had come to Middlewick to unravel the mystery of the bank robbery, was unaccountably missing. He and Burton had parted late on the previous afternoon with a full understanding of what each was to do in the impending attempt upon the institution, but, with that parting the detective had vanished as utterly as if the earth had opened and swallowed him.

Bobby Roberts, a well-known criminal from London and a member of the company engaged in the plot, was, or had been, in Middlewick on the preceding afternoon. He, too, was missing, and had never once appeared during the exciting events already recorded.

What was his part in that affair? Why had he remained in the background when he might have rendered material assistance to his confederates?

These were questions that remained to be answered.

The most discomforting conviction was that the absences of the two men were directly connected in some way, Burton could not free himself from the belief which necessarily implied the gravest peril to his friend. Though he had not an hour to spare in investigating the extraordinary proceeding was self-evident, but on the threshold he was confronted by the dread that he was powerless. The tracing out of the guilty abstractor or abstractors of the funds could wait; his province was to help the detective, or, if it should prove too late to do that, to bring home the crime of his murder to the right parties.

Uncertain of what he ought to do, Jack Burton resorted to a trifling artifice, from which he expected little, but which, as is often the case in this life, was the means of bringing about momentous results.

First, going to his lodgings, he told the old couple that he would remain with them a few days longer. He had brought a small box to Middlewick, but left the house with a commercial travelling bag. He made his way to the only hotel in the town and was assigned a room on the second floor, adjoining that which had been occupied by his friend, Taylor.

A few inquiries disclosed the fact that that gentleman's

Applied his nose to the neck of the bottle.

luggage was still in his room, but that he had not been there since six o'clock the night before.

Within the past twenty-four hours, but one new entry had been made in the visitors' book — "John O'Cane, London." Burton would have liked to have made inquiries regarding him but concluded it was imprudent to do so; opportunity was likely to present itself for seeing the individual without drawing attention to the inquiry.

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Burton had been in his room only a short time when he gained the chance for a brief stolen visit to his friend's apartment. A quick searching glance satisfied him that nothing was to be learned there and he withdrew to his own quarters.

The town, as it was to be expected, was in a ferment over the occurrences of the night before. They could not be kept from the public nor was there any reason to do so. The reporters were very keen on the matter, a number speedily arriving from town. Burton had to submit to any number of interviews, all of which he accepted good-naturedly; but after he had told the story some dozen times, skilfully keeping back a number of the most important points, he shook himself free and went directly to the Governor's office at the County Gaol whither the three prisoners had been removed.

He made his way to the only hotel in the town.

"Have they had any visitors?" he inquired.

"The whole town is eager to see them if I would permit it," replied the Governor. "Do you want to see them?"

"No. Time enough for me when I have to."

"You caught them neatly," remarked the Governor approvingly. "Who put you on their track?"

"Sometimes a word heard by chance gives an unexpected clue," replied the caller. "Good luck has much more to do with success in matters like that, than skill. So they have had no visitors?"

"Only one—a lawyer."

"Who is he? Anyone in Middlewick?"

"No, a stranger, at least to me. He is from London."

"Do you know his name?"

The custodian of the county prisoners turned to the visitors' book on the desk near him, and, after a glance, replied:

"John O'Cane."

"What time did he go?"

"He hasn't left yet. He came about an hour ago and introduced himself as a lawyer and friend of the parties. I had no reason to disbelieve him, so I called one of the warders to show him to their cells. Do you know the man?"

"I have never met a person of that name."

"I think he is off now," remarked the Governor, as the noise made by the opening and closing of the outer door penetrated his room.

Burton rose to his feet and walked to the front window of the room. The iron bars stretched across the panes on the outside did not interfere with his view of the yard and the path down which visitors walked in coming to and from the gaol.

A tall, well-dressed man was walking briskly towards the gate. Something in his figure and walk struck Burton familiarly, but he waited to gain a view of his face. This came when he reached the street. In the clear sunlight the man's countenance was fully revealed.

It was, as Burton suspected, John O'Cane was one of Mr. Roberts' numerous aliases, as indeed was the surname by which he was best known. He was the individual who had just held a consultation with the prisoners and the man who beyond question had to do with the disappearance of Mr. Taylor.

Excusing himself, Burton hurried out and reached the street while the man was yet in sight. It was not difficult, therefore, to follow him.

Up the High Street went Mr. Roberts straight to the office of the principal solicitor in Middlewick, where he remained until noon. When he came out he proceeded to the hotel and to his room.

A quarter of an hour later, Burton was in his apartment, which was upon the same floor.

Burton had undertaken a most difficult task in thus shadowing this man. While ordinarily such a duty is not ranked among the highest arts that the professional detective must master, yet circumstances often arise which place it almost beyond achievement. It will readily be seen that the present case was such a one, for the man he was shadowing was one of the shrewdest criminals of the day, who was always on the alert for his mortal enemies, the officers of the law. A single slip on Burton's part, and the whole scheme would fall to the ground.

It has been stated that before accepting the position of watchman at the Middlewick Bank, Burton had effected a number of changes in his personal appearance; indeed, few of his friends meeting him in the little country town would have suspected his identity.

But while a change of costume is easy, the transformation of one's personality is a far different matter. It can be done so as to deceive the most watchful where the light is poor and the circumstances favourable, but it may well be questioned whether the most skilful detective can conceal his identity from a pair of bright inquiring eyes under the glare of the electric light or the rays of the noonday sun.

At any rate, Jack Burton was so certain that if he met Roberts face to face during the daytime that the criminal would identify him, that he took every precaution to prevent such a meeting. He lunched privately in his own room to avoid meeting Roberts in the public dining-room. He closed and locked his door. His compartment being next to that of his friend commanded a view of the main street. He did not mean to let Roberts escape him again.

There was every prospect of a long watch, and Burton assumed a comfortable position and lighted his cigar. He was badly in need of sleep, but so overwrought that he had no fear of dropping into unconsciousness. Half-an-hour passed when his keen sense of hearing caught the sound of a cautious footstep outside in the corridor. Someone was creeping about and trying to avoid detection.

"It's Roberts," concluded the watcher. "He's up to mischief."

The catlike footsteps halted opposite his own door. Then Burton saw the handle silently turned. It went round far enough to draw the catch out of the lock. A gentle pressure followed, but the door being fastened did not yield.

A second time the effort was made with the same result, then the would-be intruder ceased. The key was in the lock, the door could not be opened without pushing it out and inserting another instrument.

Holding his handkerchief, as if by accident, so as to conceal his features, Burton watched the door. He knew it

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was Roberts who was trying the lock and he did not mean that he should gain a view of his face by any chance.

A few seconds later Roberts withdrew from the door, without perceptible noise, and while Burton was still idly wondering what his next move would be, he heard a faint sound in his friend's room.

The noise was slight, but it was as if a chair had been gently stirred.

Burton's face lighted up. He understood now what it all meant. Roberts was looking for Taylor's room and had mistaken Burton's for it. Earlier in the day the detective had taken the precaution of locking Taylor's door and taking out the key so the intruder must have opened it with a false one. Burton stepped to the wall and pressed his ear against it. He could readily hear the man stealthily moving about. The listener was indignant and felt a strong impulse to burst into the room and thrust out the intruder.

But that would have been impolitic to the last degree. It would bring the couple face to face—the very catastrophe which Burton was so anxious to avoid. Besides, Roberts could easily plead that he had made a mistake, and in justice demand what right Burton had to interfere.

Whatever the intruder's errand, it was quickly over and he withdrew. Softly opening his own door, Burton listened. The next minute the man was heard descending the stairs. There being no cause for a secrecy in this movement, it was easy to hear his footsteps.

Burton darted to his window, holding himself ready to follow the other, but minute after minute passed without anything being seen of him.

A man in Burton's position cannot restrain himself from forming theories without number respecting the one great subject in his mind. It would be useless to attempt to give those which came to him, most of them being dismissed as soon as they assumed shape. It is only necessary to say that, for the first time since he had undertaken the singular task before him, Burton began to consider the possibility that his first supposition was wrong, and that strange as was his friend's disappearance, Roberts after all had nothing to do with it. The probabilities, however, still pointed the other way, and he was determined to keep the man under supervision.

At the end of half-an-hour Burton descended the stairs, resolved to find out what had become of Roberts. He found him enjoying an after-dinner smoke, having finished which, he settled his hotel bill as though with the intention of leaving the town. He then walked leisurely to the railway station, where he purchased a ticket for London, and a quarter of an hour later saw him on his way to the Metropolis. This might be a blind, but Burton believed the man intended really going there; indeed, nothing seemed more natural than that he should do so. Instead, therefore, of following him, Burton decided to remain in Middlewick.

Burton stepped to the wall.

So critical did he consider the situation that he decided upon a step which under other circumstances nothing could have induced him to take. He went to the office of the attorney with whom Roberts had had an interview earlier in the day.

"I expected to meet my old friend, Mr. O'Cane, here," was his explanation, when he found himself in the presence of that dignitary; "but I'm afraid I've missed him."

"You must have mistaken the appointment if you had one," was the attorney's reply, as he scrutinised his visitor as though he recollected seeing him before.

"I am afraid I must have. Can you tell me where I am likely to find him?"

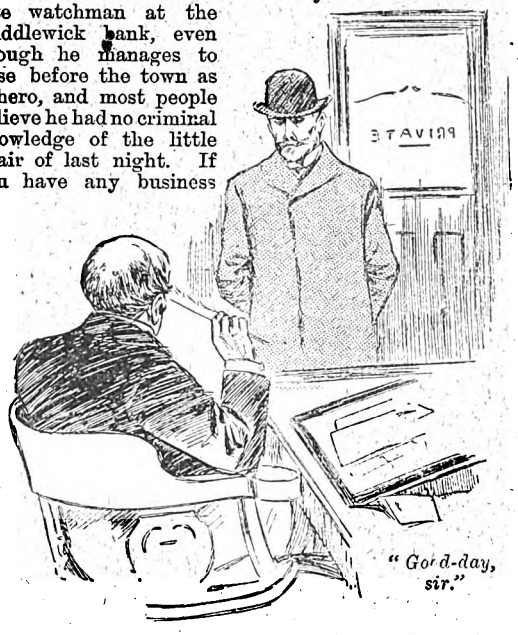
"Isn't he at the hotel?"

"No. I left there a few minutes ago and they told me he had returned to London."

"Then how do you expect to see him here?"

"I thought he might have left some message for me as to his whereabouts."

"If he had done so I would hardly communicate it to the late watchman at the Middlewick bank, even though he manages to pose before the town as a hero, and most people believe he had no criminal knowledge of the little affair of last night. If you have any business with me, sir, I refuse to listen to it, and the sooner you leave this office the better."



"Good-day, sir."

"I shall go when I wish to. A man in your position has too hard work to earn his bread-and-butter to give any consideration to the character of his clients or the justice of their cases."

"That remark is warranted by your own presence in my office, but I decline to take your case."

"It's easy to decline that which has not been offered. I have not yet fallen so low as to appeal to you for help."

"Nor I so low as to give it."

"Well?" added Burton, rising from his chair, "I wish you good luck in defending a lot of the worst criminals that ever afflicted this country. I have no doubt the task is a congenial one."

"Far better than defending one who assaults so important a person as the police superintendent."

"No doubt you will earn your fee, but your clients have less money to waste upon legal advice than they would have had had I not helped to bring their schemes to nought."

"It is not difficult for an honest man to obtain defence, while a dishonest person needs twice as much to clear himself, a fact which you would do well to bear in mind. But I must really decline to waste any more time upon you."

"And I am sorry that I have already wasted more valuable time than yours."

"Oblige me, then, by leaving."

"Good-day, sir."

The attorney made no response and Burton withdrew, feeling that in this after view at least, he had got the best of it.

(To be continued.)

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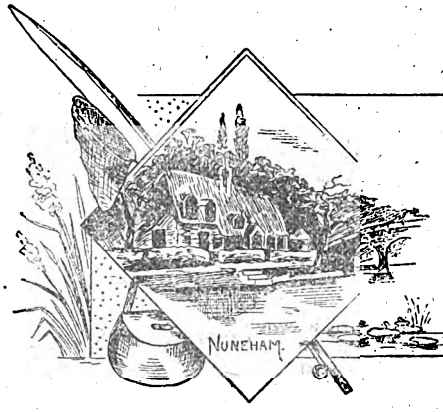

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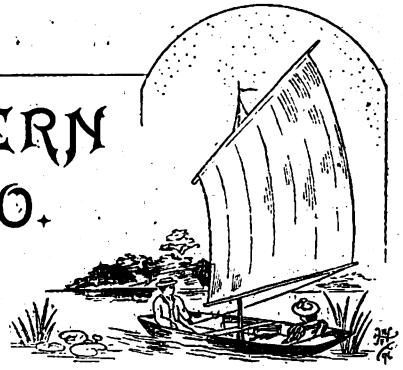

Covent Garden Theatre was in a blaze of light, and the gaily-attired figures were gracefully keeping time to the sweet strains of Glover's magnificent band, while others were idly "sitting out" the dances, and conversing on the fashionable topics of the season.

Amongst these we see two figures partly hidden by the large palms, one, that of Rosa Bellafonce, who is admirably attired as "Sappho," her long black satin mantle lined throughout with scarlet showed off her magnificently modelled figure to perfection, her beautifully shaped head crowned with a rich wealth of golden curls, on which was daintily placed her black satin Sappho hat.

Miss Rosa Bellafonce was (so the critics said) "the queen of burlesque;" her dancing eyes and graceful easy movements—to say nothing of her beautiful figure—had taken the hearts of the general public. The second person was Lord Dewhurst—a charming boy with an effeminate face, limited vocabulary, and a magnificent banking account, which was without doubt the charm he held for Miss Bellafonce. His age (judging from his boyish countenance) might have been seventeen at most.

In reality, however, young Lord Dewhurst was just twenty. He was an awkward, blushing youth, on whose shoulders Society manners might have rested a trifle more comfortably had not his fair companion robbed him of his very limited senses.

"Shall we—ah, take a turn, Miss Rosa?" he is asking, adjusting his eyeglass, and gazing at Rosa in rapture.

"No, Dewhurst—believe me, I am far more comfortable where I am," she answered sweetly, placing her hand on his arm. Poor Bertie blushes scarlet, and endeavours to stammer a pretty speech, in which he fails hopelessly.

"By Jove, Miss Rosa," he says at last, with a great effort, "you look stunning to-night—what—ah—ripping idea to have—chosen that—costume."

"Do you think so?" laughed Rosa, rising, and glancing at herself in a long mirror, and holding out her mantle for the benefit of the bewildered Bertie, who could not find words to express his admiration.

"Come, Lord Dewhurst, let us take a turn now, my favourite waltz has just commenced."

Rosa takes the proffered arm with a playful squeeze, and they join the merry throng.

Many envious glances are cast in their direction as they glide over the polished floor, and thus run the whispers:

"Great Scot! old chappie—why, it's Rosa from the Frivolity—the queen of principal boys—and, by Jove! it's Dewhurst who is with her; he'll make a fool of himself over her. But only wait until the Earl, his grandfather, sees him. The old fellow won't like being cut out by his heir; she is a great pet of his."

"Is the old boy here to-night?" asked a *blasé*-looking fellow, with a bored, languid air.

"Yes, he is never out of an affair of this kind—a sad old dog is Earl Dewhurst."

Thus ran the chatter round the theatre as the fair actress and her youthful admirer glided through the crowd.

Bertie Dewhurst perhaps was not aware that his aristocratic grandfather was watching him keenly all the evening. There was a curious expression on his florid countenance—one of amusement and yet envy.

"Foolish boy," he mutters incessantly to himself, "I must have a word with Rosa to-night."

* * * * *

The following morning Rosa Bellafonce is fully equipped. She is admiring herself in a glass, being quite satisfied with her appearance, she seats herself in her dainty boudoir, and anxiously watches the progress of the clock.

It is nearly twelve.

The Earl Dewhurst is expected at twelve forty-five, and his grandson at twelve. Rosa fears that they should meet, if so her game would be up. "I wonder if Bertie will come?" she asks herself with a doubtful smile. "Suppose they should meet;" she gives vent to a harsh, musical laugh at the idea.

It was only a few weeks since she had been introduced to Lord Dewhurst, and on their first interview she made up her mind that she should be Lady Dewhurst.

The fact was Miss Bellafonce had already tired of the glamour of the footlights, and seated thus in a luxury of indolence she discovered that the bouquets and the chappies' admiration hardly repaid her in her efforts to please. This was evidently her opportunity. "Dolly Drinkwater married the Duke of Brentford, and Gracie Jellingham the grandson of an earl, and why not I—I'm equally good-looking as either, and a greater favourite."

Her only fear was, as she sat thinking over her well laid plans, would the blushing, awkward Bertie be as enchanted by the light of day as he had been by the glare of the footlights?

Yes, she thought he would now she had taken her boy in hand and was determined to bring him to the point.

Her meditations were disturbed by the clock chiming out the hour of twelve, to be almost immediately followed by a sharp ring of the electric bell at the hall door.

Posing herself gracefully with studied *abandon* on the satin couch, Rosa awaited the entrance of Bertie.

A neat little French maid announced the visitor, and Rosa, feigning sleepiness, closed her large blue eyes.

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Bertie stood motionless, his face aflame, nervously plucking at a huge bouquet he held clumsily in his trembling hands.

"Go—good-morning, Miss Rosa," he stammered.

"Good gracious, Lord Dewhurst! you here?"

"Yes, I told you I'd call," he answered, thrusting his presentation forward and planting it in Rosa's lap.

"Did you?—oh yes, I remember; but I naturally thought you would forget all about *me*—I mean by this morning."

"Forget *you*, Rosa, do—ah—you think—that possible?"

"Yes, of course. I think it not only possible but very probable—but how did you enjoy the ball?" she asked.

"Really—awfully jolly—'pon honour, Miss Rosa, I—ah—should have been—awfully—bored if you'd not been there though."

"Now you are joking, Lord Dewhurst; what earthly difference did I make to your enjoyment?"

"Really," continued Bertie, gaining courage, "I mean it—you know, Miss Rosa, I have done nothing but think of you"—he paused for breath—"ever since I first saw you."

"Really?"

"Ye—as, but Rosa—" slipping his arm round her waist. He was undoubtedly gaining courage, and after coughing carefully into his elaborate silk handkerchief, he continued:

"Miss Rosa—do—ah—you know what I came to say to you?"

"Can't say, dear boy," she answered sweetly.

"Don't you think that—" again he paused, and removed his arm and gazed at his turned-in toes.

"Don't I think what?" asked Rosa.

"That—eh—ah awfully jolly hop, wasn't it. By Jove!"

Rosa could hardly suppress laughing in his face.

It seemed a lame beginning but he was progressing favourably she thought.

"I believe," he continued, regaining his composure a little, "that I enjoyed the ball because you were there, Rosa."

Rosa only laughed, fearing to say anything, in case of putting a stop to his utterance altogether.

"Rosa—can't you see that I think you the cleverest girl in the world?"

She hung her head modestly for a moment, and then lifting her eyes gazed fondly at him.

That look was too much for him, he was at her feet.

"Rosa, will you be *my wife!*"

His nervousness had flown to the four winds, he seemed to see nothing but the lovely actress before him.

"But Bertie—your grandfather," she said archly.

"He will be all right—he won't mind—if he does, it will only be envy that will make him angry—but Rosa, you have not answered me."

"Do you really mean it? Are you serious?" asks Rosa.

"I swear I am, Rosa."

In another moment she was in his arms.

Rosa's brain was still working hard.

Was it worth consideration? Had Bertie spoken truly about his grandfather's adoration? The old dotard was just seventy-four, with his coffers well filled. One thing she must do—probe deeper into Bertie's monetary affairs, and see what should be her next best move. She had not mentioned to Bertie that there had been many a quiet little flirtation between Earl Dewhurst and herself in the wings at the Frivolity.

No, she thought, "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," so the old adage had it. She would accept the offer which lay open to her and await further developments. Should the Earl turn up trumps, all would be well, if not—then the boy must suffer.

"Suppose, Bertie," she said, turning her face to his, "your grandfather should disinherit you. I cannot let you lose your fortune through me."

"He cannot leave me penniless, Rosa, and we could live on five hundred a year."

"Could we, though?" thought Rosa.

"Besides, Rosa, we might manage to keep this little affair quiet until I come of age, and then ——"

Just at this moment the clock struck the half hour, and Rosa started; she must rid herself of Bertie at any cost, to receive his grandfather. Turning to him she said:

"Bertie, this is so unexpected, you must give me time. Leave me now and come to-morrow for your answer."

Bertie was beside himself with excitement, and proudly left the room, overturning several small articles in his hurry.

* * * * *

Rosa Bellafonce is waiting to receive her second visitor, and busies herself in seeing that all is ready for his reception.

"Good-morning, my dear; you see I am punctual."

It is the Earl who speaks; his manner is easy, and he makes himself at home, taking the nearest seat he can find to the fascinating actress.

"I suppose you know why I asked you for this interview?" he says, gazing at Rosa.

"No, I do not," she replied with dignity.

"Well, I have heard that my grandson is about to make an ass of himself—but *I* know a trick worth two of that—and I am going to put a stop to this silly colt's gallop. Now my coffers are well filled and I am at liberty to do what I like with most of their contents—leave it to him or keep it myself. I went to the ball last night in hopes of seeing you—I mean to speak to you."

"Yes," said Rosa, "but I did see you—only for a moment."

"Well, my dear, I will cut it short. Don't you think that you would like to handle the Dewhurst fortune with those pretty little fingers?"

He took her shapely jewelled hand in his while Rosa's merry laughter rang out blithely.

"Be the Countess and let's be married to-morrow."

"Agreed," answered Rosa, and in her triumph all her pretty shyness and graceful reserve had flown.

Throwing her shapely arms round the old man's neck, she whispered:

"You dear old darling, be it as you wish. Call for me to-morrow at ten; but, dearest, only our two selves, if you love me."

"Be it as you wish, little woman; I will be punctual, don't keep me waiting," and with a hurried embrace he left her.

Again she was left alone: she hastened to scribble a note to Bertie, which ran as follows:

STUPID BOY,—By the time you receive this we shall be far away. I have changed my mind, and I think I prefer the old hand at matrimony to the new one. You see, I shall still be something to you,—Your Grandmother, ROSA DEWHURST.

Punctually at twelve Bertie Dewhurst bounded up the steps of —— Vila and rang the bell with trembling hand. The neat handed Phyllis laughed outright as she opened the door, and handed him Rosa's note.

Hastily he tore open the dainty little envelope. His face blanched, looked blankly at the trim servant girl, and at last he managed to gasp out: "Scratched! Great Scot!—scratched!"

B. MAITLAND.

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A FINE HAUL OF FISH

From the Spanish of Don Pedro de Alarcon.

Covered with glory and with wounds in the War of the Succession and without a penny in his purse, as in those days was the case with most warriors and heroes, the noble scion of Mequinenza returned one day to his dismantled castle, to rest from the harsh fatigues of the camp and eat in peace the lentils that came with his title.

Two words let us give to the soldier and another two to his birthplace. Don Jaime de Mequinenza, baron of that name, who had fought as a captain for the interests of Louis the Fourteenth, was at that time a man of five-and-thirty years, tall, handsome, rough, brave and energetic; little lettered, but jovial and gallant to the last degree with women—particularly fond, indeed, of pretty peasants.

At the foot of this rock were a dozen cots and hovels, tenanted by the vassals of the baron, or it might rather be said by the husbandmen who tilled the few fields left to his possession. From the hamlet to the castle the road climbed by fourteen or fifteen steep terraces, above which was a moat, with its drawbridge; the moat filled by a canal or wide ditch that tapped the Ebro a league to the northward and then fell, below the fortress, in a noisy torrent back into the swelling river.

Perched on an almost inaccessible flank of the mountain, separated by this channel from the castle, and, like it, hanging above the Ebro, there was another rocky spur, crowned by a cabin and a little garden, which in that spot suggested the hanging gardens of Babylon. A heavy beam of walnut wood spanned the foaming current between the castle and the cabin, connecting these, as the drawbridge afforded communication between the castle and the hamlet.

On the lordly crag dwelt Don Jaime de Mequinenza, and on the feudal rock an eel-fisher, who had won a rich revenue from the daring thought of building his hut in that lonely and menacing spot. It had occurred to Damain, for such was the name of the fisherman, to swing from the little bridge two vast nets, through whose meshes swept the torrent, so that the teeming eels that rushed through the cutting, towards the mother waters of the Ebro, were caught here on their course back to their birthplace, and held for the land of the fisherman, who, although he had sold them at a low enough price, yet derived from this slippery source a very respectable income.

Yet for all his labour and enterprise the poor fellow could never save a cuarto. He was not a drinker, for all the cold and wet character of his business; he was not a player; his *cigarros* were of the commonest sort, and cost him the merest trifle; and for the womankind he had not so much as a passing glance, save only for Carmen.

Save only! But then, that was sufficient exception. For—oh, Carmen, Carmela, Carmelita! Here was enough to squander the revenues of an alcalde, a regidor, a prince, let alone a fisherman. For Carmen was a beauty—a Spanish blonde, think of that, ye connoisseurs!—who would have tempted Saint Anthony himself, if the grace of God should have been withdrawn from him for a moment. Such a waist! such a neck! such ankles! And Carmen knew her own good points—none better! and women of such merit as hers fall in love with themselves when they have not lovers—or when they have, for that matter—and so Carmen spent the price of all the eels in the Ebro on aprons, kerchiefs, earrings, and fallals in general, though there was not a soul to see them but her own dear self.

Damain, her husband? Oh, but he counted for nothing. What was this wretched fisher of eels?—a lout, a clown, a clod. Oh, that is quite apparent! Convinced, no doubt, of her high mission in this poor world of sorrows, Carmen every day dressed herself as if she were going to a ball or a function, and sat herself down at the door of the cabin, where she was seen by the birds, the rock-thyme, and the skies—and by naught else. Still she awaited tranquilly the moment of her destiny.

It is true that if the poor fisherman was ill-dressed, this was to give finer, better raiment to Carmen; that if the husband should labour less, to the end of sparing his hands, the wife would have worked far harder, with the result of spoiling her white ones; true, also, that those eels, which were indeed ill-smelling, paid for the sweet-scented soaps in which Carmen delighted. But who makes such observations to a woman? above all, if that woman is nineteen years old and pretty, airy, and graceful as the rainbow with its seven colours. Ah, yes! gratitude may well be a sentiment too sober for a young woman, and justice—fairness—an uncomfortable idea for a joyous imagination. These virtues are born of suffering, and Carmen was almost quite happy.

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Given these conditions, it was not at all inconsistent that the thoughts and interest of the fisherman's wife should turn to Don Jaime de Mequinenza, from the day that the news of his return to his baronial halls came to the village at the cliff's foot.

And in effect, when she set eyes upon his worship, Carmen's butterfly brain and her unloyal heart alike sung to her that this was a lord, a fine gentleman, and a hero—here was a man worthy of beauty and charm like hers.

As for the lord of the manor he was already in love with her species, and as the greater includes the less, he was undoubtedly smitten with Carmen. It was not long before they told each other, by the telegraphic code of looks and signals, their mutual and respective sentiments, but this platonic system became to both alike insupportable.

In the meantime Damain went on fishing.

Now, whether it came to pass that the people of the hamlet, failing to realise and appreciate their abject contemptibility, came to criticise the doings of the feudal master, or whether the fisherman chanced to remember that his wife was a pretty woman and Don Jaime a hot-blooded gallant, and that the castle and the cabin were not so wildly separated—there came a time when this worthy husband displayed less than his usual eagerness to make his frequent rounds of his eel-traps. He developed, also, certain rheumatic twinges in his left knee, that impaired his agility in walking, and so he hired a strapping lad whom he made his substitute in conveying the eel-baskets among the purchasers of the vicinity. This procedure of the fisherman was far from meeting with the approval of Carmen and Don Jaime.

One beautiful May evening the two spouses sat at the door of their cabin and watched the sinking sun—the same sun in those days of a century and a half since that we see now above us. That evening it was sinking as slowly and majestically as if it expected never to rise again.

Carmen and Damain, regarding that sun, whose rays dyed the horizon with a strange prophetic light, felt their very souls stirred within them. Uncultured and rude of Nature as they were, they could but feel that this was a critical hour, full of doom, of mystery, of fatality.

When the sun had set entirely, both breathed heavily as those who have completed a long and severe task.

Damain lifted his eyes to the castle, on whose topmost terrace stood the Baron of Mequinenza, whom he saluted. The lord had his eyes fixed on Carmen, who also saluted him easily. Damain stretched his rheumatic leg, and, turning to his wife, said drily: "I think my leg is well again. I feel the pangs no longer. I think I will go down to the village and stay the night there. There is a fellow owes me some money; he will be in with his pay near midnight, and I will catch him before he spends it. I will come up in the morning in time to take out the fish of to-night's fish. *Ea*, Carmelita, God be with thee."

"Good-bye, Damain," said Carmela mechanically.

They had never before parted in this way, but to both it seemed quite natural. Damain took his hat and his staff and crossed the walnut-wood bridge-way and the fosses of the castle. The sun was still gliding the peak of a distant mountain.

Twelve hours later the sun once more shone over the cabin. All the sadness and foreboding of the day before had been pure farce. There was the sun again, red and joyous as ever, climbing up the heavens as blithely as if this was his first journey there, and shedding life and movement wherever his rays reached.

As to Damain, he, like the sun, seemed in better humour than on the preceding evening, if he might be judged by the lively and frolicsome manner with which he ascended the terraces of the castle, followed by some other fishers, all singing the most villainous *jota* that had been produced in their country. They reached the drawbridge, crossed the courts of the castle, still lying in silence, and reached the plane fronting Damain's cabin.

"How loud the cascade roars!" said one of the men.

"But what has become of the bridge?" cried another.

"True for you! Look! look! it has slipped from each end! it has sunken into the cutting—it has broken!"

"But how can that be? Such a beam—so long, so well supported by its length! so heavy! and of walnut—a wood as strong as iron!"

"I shall have to buy another," said Damain, shrugging his shoulders; "but come, boys, let the bridge be, and help me with the seines before it grows later." And, taking up the thread of his interrupted song, he began with the others to draw up the eel-nets.

"The dickens! how it weighs them!" cried one of his comrades; "thou hast done well with this haul, Damaincito!"

"At the least it is ten arrobas," said another; "oh, a fine catch! unheard of!"

"I believe you!" shouted a third; "it is more likely he has caught, not eels, but the bridge of walnut wood!"

Damain only smiled without speaking.

"Do you say that net is heavy?" called one of the men, pulling on the second seine; "well, this one is not behind it. This weighs not less than twelve arrobas—all of three hundred weight."

"Oh! it's a couple of big rocks that have fallen in," said an envious-minded fellow.

Damain was gloomy, trembling, covered with a cold sweat. "So one seine weighs heavy as the other," he muttered; "oh! but it cannot be!" He stepped out of the water and slowly took his way to the cabin.

By this time the first seine was coming up to the bank, and in it appeared, truly enough, the bridge of walnut wood. Not all of it, but the half. It was not doubted that during the night the bridge had been sawed across the middle. The men who dragged it out were staring with surprise and terror; they started back with horror-stricken faces, shrieking.

At the same moment Damain appeared in the door of his cabin, with his hair on end, his eyes fixed and starting, and a look of utter stupidity, yet screaming with laughter—a laughter like a voice from Bedlam. He had found his home deserted and the couch of Carmen untouched by her since the day before. And the fishermen had seen in the net with the walnut timber the pallid face of Don Jaime.

A moment after, their frightened mates drew out the second seine, with the other half of the bridge and the body of Carmen.

"She, also?" Damain shouted; "oh! I did not look for that, though! I thought she would wait for him in the house; I never dreamt she would run to meet him! But she did, you see! She was impatient to meet her lover, and she went on the bridge to meet him. But I had been there before them. I sawed it! sawed it! sawed it! Oh! what a fine haul we have made to-day, boys. A good catch of fish is this we have made, boys!" And, shrieking, he ran and shut himself in the cabin.

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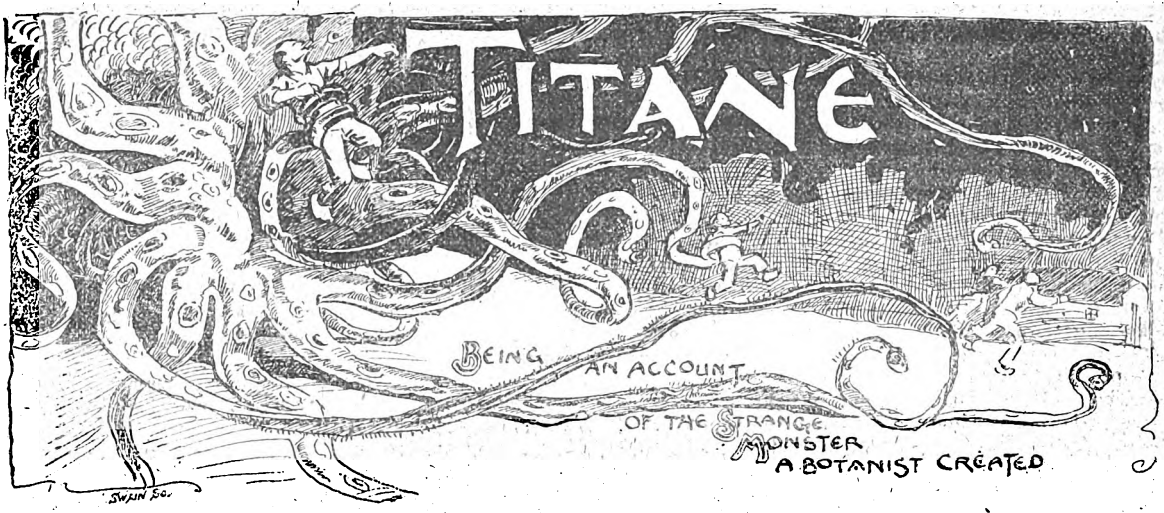

Translated from the French of Jules Lermina.

I HAD never seen her handwriting before; and yet, the instant the letter was brought to me, I knew it was from Paula, whom I had not seen for three long years, not since she had become the wife of Frederick Wertheim, the brilliant botanist whose researches had won the plaudits of the whole scientific world. Paula and I had been friends from childhood, and I had naturally expected to see her handwriting embellished with all manner of capricious little twists and curls; but I knew it was from her as soon as I saw my name on the envelope, despite the hurried, nervous letters, and I felt instinctively that something was amiss.

I broke the seal hurriedly—the sheet bore but two words "come" and her name, "Paula."

Such a request from her was to me an order. I did not hesitate a moment. Paula and her husband lived on a large estate about six miles distant from the city. But my strolls had never led me in that direction; it would have brought up dreams of my childhood that were best forgotten—but there, it does no good to sentimentalise in this fashion.

It was early autumn, and I had to urge my horse through a heavy fog. The château in which Paula lived was situated at the extremity of an avenue of chestnut trees whose boughs interlaced to form a long, dark tunnel. As I entered this avenue, it seemed to me that far in the black circle, which looked like the cave of some terrible beast, I could see the vague features of a horrid, grinning mask, shadowy as mist, which menaced me and dared me to come on. The sinister impression of this hallucination was so strong that I drew rein and half stopped, leaning forward on my horse's neck to peer into the profound darkness. Then, driving the spurs into my horse's flanks, I dashed into the unknown.

I was almost thrown by the abruptness with which the horse stopped, for just before me was an iron gate, surmounted by a curiously carved head, a masterpiece of the ironworker's skill, which accounted for my strange illusion of the night before. And behind the twisted bars of the gate stood Paula, awaiting me, her rosy baby in her arms. Even in the darkness I could see that she was very pale and that her face showed signs of suffering. I jumped from the saddle, and in an instant was raising to my lips the hand she extended to me.

Arrived at the porch she stopped a moment as if listening. She could have heard nothing, for she slowly opened the heavy door, which swung silently to disclose a heavily carpeted hall. And a moment later we were in a small reception room, lighted by candles which threw a fitful gleam upon our faces.

"Listen."

They were the first words she had pronounced, and the sad tones of her voice told me she had suffered deeply.

"I have summoned you," she went on; "you are the friend of my childhood. The bond between us has been strained, but it is not broken. Three years ago I became Frederick's wife. As a child I had thought of him, whom they already called professor, as a being whom none might disobey; he won me with a word, his glance held me, and I felt myself conquered by his will. My weakness leant upon his strength. I was proud to bow before this will that seemed to dominate all things. I speak of these matters because it is necessary that you should understand all, for I have sore need of your help."

"Why, what is the matter? Does Frederick dare——"

"Frederick is goodness itself, he loves me—but, I am afraid, I fear—I fear him above all things. Why? Oh, if I could but tell you! if I could but know myself! But this fear which torments me every day, and every night still more, is the more poignant because it is inexplicable!"

"Bah! Terror, fear—these are mere words," said I lightly, though I was far from feeling at ease.

"Words which sound in our brains, nevertheless, which are intelligible to our reason, which awake dread echoes. Why do you smile? Do you not know that mystery is stronger than reason, that from it arises the anguish of the unknown?"

In spite of myself, in spite of my wish to appear

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sceptical, I felt most unpleasantly disturbed. Lowering my voice, I interrogated her in a gentler tone. This is what she told me: For six months past, that is to say since the birth of her child, Frederick, who, until then had held his head high, like a soldier who feels his victory near, had all at once grown nervous. Of what problem was he seeking the solution? What combat had he dared to undertake? He became morbidly silent, and replied to his wife's questions only with haggard looks, as if he begged her not to arouse some distressing memory. For days and nights he remained shut up in a hot-house which he had had constructed at great expense in the park.

Weeks passed without his appearing at the château. Sometimes, in the night, he would creep silently into his wife's chamber. She had watched him while he believed her to be sleeping. She had seen him seated on a lounge, with fixed eyes staring at some fearful object. There was in his contracted face an expression of indescribable horror. His face shook, and his hands, agitated in a convulsive movement, seemed to repulse some invisible enemy. Then—oh, she had studied him carefully in those brief moments—he had looked up with an imperious triumphant resolution. Springing up suddenly, he had fled. Paula had flown to the window, she had seen him hurry towards the hot-house, where the lights flared always from dusk to dawn like a light-house.

Frankly and boldly she had questioned him. What was going on down there in the park? Why did he so obstinately refuse to let anyone enter the hot-house?

With a shudder he had coldly put her aside unanswered.

Then, brave hypocrite that she was, she had tried to fathom the truth. And she had learned a strange thing. Each day Frederick made the gardener buy many pounds of fresh meat, and himself carried them in the evening to the hot-house. What could he be nourishing there? Was it some dangerous, unknown animal that he was compelled to feed, a creature with which he was resigned to live alone for some scientific purpose? And what was that struggle, to which his rebellions in the night bore witness.

Was he mad? That thought had pierced the stricken heart of Paula like a dagger. She dared not question him more, as she saw anguish bring wrinkles to his face; and, too, he avoided her. He came no more, as had been his wont, to chat with her in the intervals of his work. Sometimes, however, she saw him, haggard and bare-headed, striding up and down the paths, wringing his hands, and ever and anon casting nervous glances towards the hot-house.

At last—and this was the last torment—one night, while she slept, he had come, with his noiseless tread into her chamber. She had felt that he was there, and she had suddenly opened her eyes. Frederick, standing there motionless, glared at his child's cradle with the hungry eyes of a madman, and his hands contracted as in supplication.

"Frederick! Frederick! What are you doing here at this hour!"

He had muttered a brutal imprecation, and again had fled!

This is what Paula told me, as she spoke, I felt a reassuring sense of relief descend upon my heart. What was it, after all—a mere state of morbidness brought on by excessive work. I had been Frederick's pupil and friend for years, and I had often listened with wonder at the boldness of the hypotheses he launched into when warmed up on one of his favourite topics. Was I not a physician, and did I not recognise the madness of fever when I was brought face to face with it? So thinking, I reasoned with myself, and, sure of my eloquence and the power of reason, I went out into the park in search of Frederick.

Night had fallen, and the pathways were but dimly lighted by the stars. Presently I saw the hot-house of which Paula had spoken. It was large and well-built, surmounted with a Mauresque dome. The lights inside were not yet lit, but the stars glinted brightly on the curved glass panes.

So therein lay the mystery. I almost laughed aloud as I thought of Paula's childish fears.

As I stood taking in the details of the structure, a hurried step grated on the gravelled path. Turning sharply about, I saw, or rather divined, in the deep shadow of the trees, Frederick Wertheim.

Haggard and bare-headed, striding up and down the paths.

"Frederick," said I boldly, "do you not recognise me?"

He stopped abruptly.

"Frederick," I continued, "it is I," and I held out my hand, surprised not to feel his own.

Then guided, as it seemed to me, rather by the sound of my voice than by his eyes, he leant forward, and, in a harsh, cracked voice, which sounded like the breaking of a branch, he said:

"You! What do you want? Leave me!"

"What! Is this the way you receive me after so long a separation? Have you forgotten our old friendship?"

He was undecided, wavering where he stood. I noticed, for the first time, that he carried on his arm a basket, which seemed to be quite heavy.

"I cannot stop," he said, "let me pass."

"Why, certainly you can pass," I replied; "but you will not prevent me, I suppose, from following you. I want to have an old-time chat with you."

He chuckled in an uncanny fashion.

"You would follow me? Bah!"

"On my soul, professor, this glass palace must conceal some treasure of which you are very jealous."

With his free hand he seized my arm, and, as I kept silent, he leant forward as one who listens. I seemed to make out some faint, singular sound, something like the gliding of a reptile through the grass.

"She is waiting for me!" he cried, in a tone in which I could detect an ill-suppressed terror; "I must go."

"Well, if you must go, let us go together."

He seemed to hesitate still. Then, with a determined gesture, he muttered: "Come, then; even you could defend me, if by any chance——"

He did not complete the sentence. But as his hand glided over mine, I felt that it was cold as ice.

He led me now. We arrived before the door of the hot-house. He drew a key from his pocket, and turned

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it in the lock; and, as I stepped forward, seeing nothing about me in the darkness, he drew me back with sudden violence.

"On your life," he whispered, "do not move."

In spite of my assurance, I felt a vague, unreasoning dread seize upon me. Again I heard that strange rustling which had struck me before, it was a gentle, gliding sound, such as is made by a paper slipping across a marble floor.

All at once, I knew not how, Frederick caused a glaring, blinding light to illuminate the hot-house, and—horrified, my hair standing upon my head, I fell back against the door, my hands clutching its iron bars!

In the centre of the room, in the midst of an endless variety of fantastically formed plants, a being, a nightmare, a horror arose before my eyes; a hydra, a polyp—a thing no man could name.

It had the shape of a colossal gourd, and from its surface innumerable arms reached out, with glaucous bulbs, like eyes, at the end of each. The inner body seemed green, the arms were of reddish purple, and, as they spread out to those ghoulish eyes, the blood-red seemed to blend and mingle to the greenness of a putrescent corpse.

My eyes closed involuntarily, and I felt a terrible griping at my heart; and still I heard that gliding sound, which I divined came from those arms as they reached forth and contracted within themselves again incessantly.

"Assassin! You have killed Titane!"

At last, surprised that I had not been seized by this hideous and monstrous thing, I mustered up strength to look at it. Frederick, who was now as pale as death, had taken from the basket a piece of meat, and, with infinite precautions, balancing gingerly on the tips of his toes, as if he feared lest his hand be touched by those horrible tentacles, he placed the raw morsel on the extremity of a cluster of those waving arms. And suddenly, as if they were of elastic, the arms drew in upon themselves, dragging the meat, which was thus brought to the shorter arms, which I now saw composed an inner circle. And all the arms bent towards the centre, till I could no longer see the meat.

Shuddering and sick at heart, I glanced at Frederick. His forehead was covered with perspiration, his teeth chattered—the demoniac brute was motionless now, ravenous over its monstrous deglutition.

"She eats, Titane eats!" he whispered.

"Titane?" I repeated after him stupidly.

"You do not know, you do not understand! Do you not recognise her? Now, look, she is tamed—" and all at once I comprehended; I saw that "Titane" was this monstrous beast.

"For nearly an hour she will be this way," said Frederick; "ah, I know why you have come! They think me mad! But it is not true—mad, I—I, who by a miracle of perseverance, by a master-work of selection, have developed the insectivorous plant *Drosera* to this formidable size. You will see it, this monster, hold out its tentacles to me in an instant empty—and I must nourish it, I must feed it, or—" He glanced about him apprehensively.

"Or?" I repeated.

"Listen," said he; "you shall know my secret. You know with what ardour I followed the discoveries of Nitschke, Warming and Darwin in the study of those strange plants that are intermediate between the vegetable and animal worlds, which entrap insects, seize them, and feed upon them, slowly absorbing and sucking nourishment from them. I was sure of the results of these strange studies, I did not doubt the end for an instant, and I said to myself that the *Droscra*, the *Dionœa*, the *Drosophyllum* are—listen to me well now—the degenerate posterity of monstrous animals, whose terrible forms have remained to us in the legends of the most primitive peoples. Hydras, chimeras, krakens, dragons—all have existed, the human imagination has created nothing.

"But by climatic adaptations, because of geological transplantation, and through the thousand-and-one modifying forces of nature, these formidable beings, deprived of the nourishment that was necessary to them, have retrogressed, by a kind of inverted atavism, into the vegetable form, have become immovable, attached

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to the soil by roots. They were compelled to seek their chief nourishment directly from the earth itself, and they have become plants again, preserving only the supreme aptitude, sole vestige of their lost life, the faculty of animal nutrition.

"I determined to reconstitute this atropic genus; I determined that I would change the plant back into the beast. Ah, how many attempts have failed. At length chance—all our science is but the child of chance—placed in my hands a *Drosera* of exceptional size. I have nourished her, and I have developed within her the remnants of the animal juices. Little by little she has evolved and grown, until at last, the acme of deduction, the hydra, the dragon, lives again! Behold my Titane—enormous and sublime! Behold her, ferocious in the hunger that I cannot sate!"

And as two tentacles separated themselves from the mass and waved softly in the air, with a hideous, ceaseless motion, he gently laid upon them a fresh piece of flesh.

"But you do not know all," he continued, in a low tone; "if Titane should be very hungry—I did not foresee this—in her present condition of ferocious power, she would tear herself from the place to which her now enfeebled roots bind her; and then, a terrible and all-powerful brute, she would drag her slimy and enormous bulk out into the world where there are men and women, and little children—and what has been my triumph would be my crime.

"I fear that she may escape some day, and lest she become hungry, I watch her every hour, night and day. Were I once but a few minutes late, and I *know* that she would hurl herself upon the world, menacing my wife and child, whom she would first encounter. Let her eat, let her eat, for she must not wish to move from here."

And again he tossed down great masses of meat. And through the fibres of this horrible plant passed purple tides of the extracted blood.

At this moment, as I stood speechless, overwhelmed with the intensity of my revulsion, the barred door, which I had not securely shut, swung softly open, and Paula appeared.

Her courage had been stronger than her fear. Now that she knew I was there, she had had the boldness to violate the secrecy of this chamber of horrors.

"Frederick!" she cried.

But to her call a blood-curdling shriek responded. In his surprise at her sudden appearance, Frederick had recoiled a step, and forgetful of his danger, touched with his hand the monster's tentacles. With lightning rapidity all the hideous trumpet-mouths had seized upon the hand, grasping the wrist, the forearm! Oh, horror! I saw it drawn down by that resistless suction. I seized him about the body, straining every muscle to draw him from the embrace of the terrible Titane—but the brute was stronger than I.

Then my eyes fell upon an axe in the corner.

"The trunk! the trunk!" I cried to Paula; "cut it, hack it!"

Weak as she was from fright, she seized the axe and swung its shining blade and struck one blow that cut through the very roots of the plant. It seemed to make an effort to rise, to hurl itself at us, and then, powerless, suddenly collapsed with a flaccid sound like wet linen, and at the same time I pulled the unfortunate Frederick loose from the relaxed tentacles.

Paula caught him in her arms. He opened his eyes, and, in a last spasm, fixed them on me as he said: "Assassin! you have killed Titane!"

And he fell back dead.

GLANCE AT THIS.

The following is a list of some of the authors and artists who have contributed to PEARSON'S MAGAZINE for April:

THE MARQUIS OF LORNE, K.T.
SIR EVELYN WOOD.
RUDYARD KIPLING.
SIR WALTER BESANT.
ARCHIBALD FORBES.
IAN MACLAREN.
STANLEY L. WOOD.
G. G. MANTON.
GEORGE ASHTON.
GEORGES MONTBARD.
R. SAUBER, R.B.A.
HAL HURST, R.B.A.

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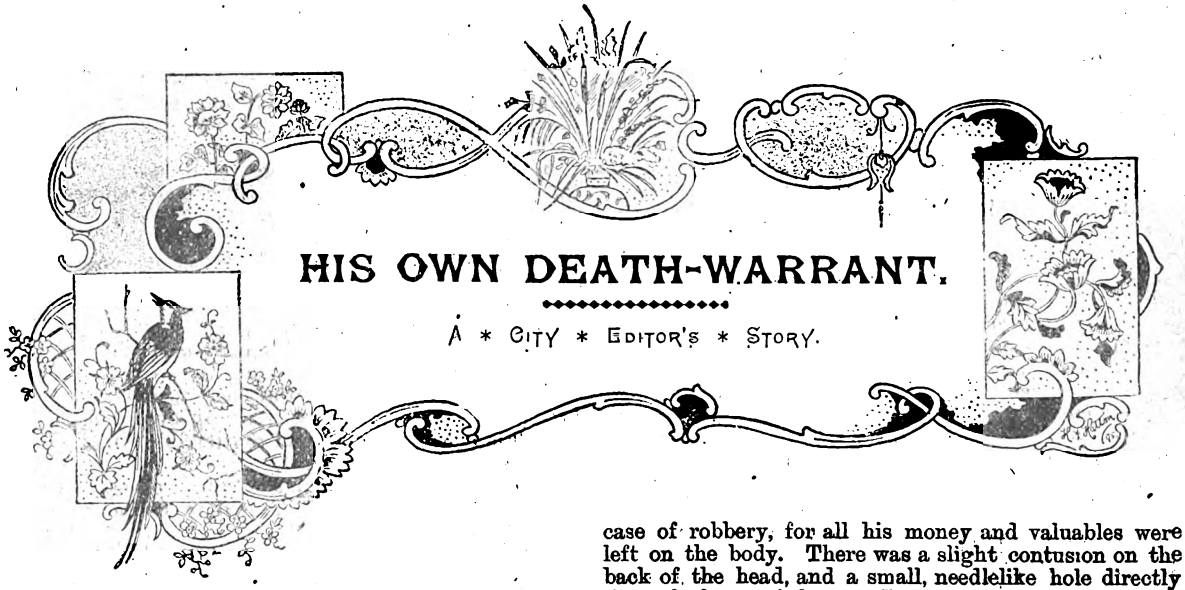

HIS OWN DEATH-WARRANT.

A * City * Editor's * Story.

"It was in a provincial town, some years ago," remarked the City editor, "that I was on the staff of a morning paper. We had a man on the paper who was simply a crank on homicides; and he was more than a mere reporter, for he had detective talent of the highest order. He didn't care much for the common crimes—burglaries, larcenies and the like—but give him a startling, mysterious murder, and he was splendid. Not only did he have the history of all the famous murders at his fingers' ends, but he delighted in ferreting out the most mysterious crimes that came within our province. In every case, except the one I am telling about, he traced the murderer before the detectives ever dreamt of his identity.

"I have since thought the secret of his success was that he put himself mentally in the place of the murderer, and reasoned it out from motives rather than from the clue of the ordinary detective.

"'There is seldom much method,' he once said to me, when in a communicative mood; 'most men would commit it in about the same way under the same circumstances. It is only when a murderer goes about it systematically, as do the Thugs of India, that a murder becomes truly mysterious.'

"I once asked him why he did not become a regular detective.

"'I was born and bred a newspaper man,' he said, 'and habit is too strong to break.' That was literally true in his case, otherwise I might not have to tell this story.

"One morning, the body of a fine-looking man was found in an alley adjoining some electric-light works, in the very heart of the town. The evening papers had a few words on it, but didn't make much out of it, so I at once assigned it to Jones—as we will call him. Although he did not turn up at the usual hour, I had no doubt that he was already at work on it, as it was as mysterious a case as even he could desire.

"The victim was identified as a commercial traveller, who had just arrived, and, as far as was known, he had no friends or acquaintances in the town. It was not a case of robbery, for all his money and valuables were left on the body. There was a slight contusion on the back of the head, and a small, needlelike hole directly through the man's heart. It was especially strange that such a crime should have been committed in a public thoroughfare, while there was absolutely no clue to the murderer or his motive.

"But these difficulties were only such as would ordinarily put Jones on his mettle, so I did not doubt that he would have a good account of the affair. I was therefore somewhat surprised when he came in about six o'clock in the evening to hear that he knew nothing about it. He looked worn and haggard, but denied that he was ill, so I gave him an account of the murder. I thought I saw a startled look in his eyes, but he maintained his outward composure and went out without a word.

"I did not see him again that evening. About midnight I began to wonder why I had not heard from him, but only speculated on the possibility of something having happened to him, for the idea that he could possibly fail never occurred to me. Finally, after an hour had gone by, I sent a message to the police station. Word came back that there were no new developments in the case, and that Jones had not been there. Sending two men out to hunt him up, I set to work myself to make up a story of the murder from the evening papers. Just then Jones came in. His step was unsteady and his face flushed. He had evidently been drinking heavily—something I never knew him to do before—but he was quite sober; he seemed at a high nervous tension, although outwardly as calm as ever.

"I decided to let this breach of discipline pass, and merely asked him for his story of the murder. He replied that he hadn't written it.

"'Well, get to work at once,' I said, rather sharply.

"Then he surprised me by saying that he had nothing to write beyond the bare facts already known. The police had developed nothing new, and he supposed that I had worked up the story from the evening papers.

"'And has it come to pass that you wait for the police to develop a murder case for you?' I exclaimed angrily. 'As for the reports in the evening papers, you can make up a better story than they had!'

"He sat down, in apparent despair, at his desk.

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Then I relented and cajoled him a little, begging him not to spoil his great record by falling down on such a case as this. 'There's a starter for you,' said I, throwing him the article I had commenced. 'Now go ahead and fill that out with a column description of the scene.'

"'I haven't even visited it,' he replied. Nevertheless, he picked up the pages and read them as if impelled by some hateful fascination. Then he took up his pen to make a few minor corrections. For some time he sat quite still, thinking deeply. Then as if totally oblivious of my presence, he began to write.

"As sheet after sheet fell from under his fingers, I snatched them up, read them hurriedly, and shot them into the 'copy' tube to the composing room. I read rapidly, as an editor will, taking but small account of the matter so long as it ran smoothly, while I had too much confidence in him to question the accuracy of his statements. I only realised that he was writing a great story—the greatest he had ever done. He seemed inspired with the very innermost thoughts of the murderer, and under his touch every trivial incident came out with distinctness and coherency that made the cause and method of the crime perfectly plain.

"First he described the scene with accuracy of detail that would have been impossible for one who had not studied it closely. The selection of the spot, he explained, by the fact that the bright electric light, streaming through the windows, made it impossible for the passers-by to see into the shadows. Thus, while impenetrable darkness screened the assassin, ample light guided his blow, and, moreover, the rattle and roar of the machinery near by drowned all sound of the struggle.

"'The blow on the head,' he demonstrated, must have been from a loaded stick, while the wound through the heart could only have been made by one of those long, fine-bladed stilettos of Italian make. Furthermore, the fact that this peculiar weapon was driven home with a firm hand, after the victim had been stunned by a blow on the head, indicated premeditated and deliberate murder, while the theory of robbery was disproved by the fact that the man's valuables had been untouched. The only tenable theory, therefore, was that the motive of the murder was revenge.

"Altogether, a more masterly analysis of a case I never read, but here he branched off into what I at first supposed to be purely imaginary speculations as to the wrong which had led the murderer to seek the life of the unknown man. These seemed purposely vague at first, but gathered in strength and certainty, until I concluded that he must have some good foundation for them. Starting with hypotheses, he soon began to state them as facts. He described how the dead man, a once trusted friend, had entered the home of another; how, by subtle wiles and deceit, he had stolen the love of the wife; then followed an elopement and the breaking up of that once happy home.

"He told with the bitterness of truth how the scoundrel had deserted the weak and erring woman and left her to perish alone; how the idea of revenge had filled the mind of the wronged husband; how, himself unseen, he had followed every movement of the intended victim for months, and carefully plotted his destruction; how he had decoyed the doomed man to the town, and to the very spot where the murder was committed; how he had destroyed the only clues—two letters in the pockets of the dead man—and finally made his own escape, the secret safe in his own heart.

"As I read this remarkable story through, the conviction forced itself upon me that this was the absolute truth. If the writer himself had committed the deed, he could not have described it more graphically. Suddenly the thought flashed over me—could he describe such a crime thus without having committed it?

"We were alone in the room. I glanced at Jones apprehensively. He was writing rapidly—fiercely. His eyes were fixed, but he seemed looking through and beyond the paper across which his pen flew, at something fascinating—terrible! When he finished, it was with a start, as if waking from a trance. I glanced at the last page. There, to my indescribable horror, I found final confirmation of my fears.

"'My God, Jones, is this true?' I managed to gasp.

"'Every word of it, as I live,' he replied firmly, but faintly.

"'Then you have written the warrant for your own arrest,' I said.

"His head dropped on his desk, but he said not a word.

"'Jones,' said I finally, shaking him by the shoulder to make him understand my meaning, 'enough to hang you is already in type; in a few hours the papers will be published; an hour later the police will be after you! Go—make the most of your start!'"

* * * * *

"It was as I predicted," said the City editor, after a pause. "Before the paper had been published an hour, a detective called on me to ascertain the source of that story. I simply pointed to Jones' name, and they were after him."

"Did they catch him?" asked a young reporter eagerly.

"They found him in his room, with a stiletto through his heart," said the City editor.

Willard Holcomb.

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THE PORTRAIT.

From the French of Armand Silvestre.

You will look in vain for a painting by Cascamille in this year's Salon; in fact it is extremely probable that he will never exhibit again, for that misadventure of last year will not be forgotten for many a long day.

Cascamille is an artistic mediocrity; that is the plain truth. The only thing he is any good at is the painting of cattle, sheep, and pigs; when he attempts anything else, he fails miserably. But he *is* good at drawing those animals. For instance, when he executes a study of a young bull, the little hard excrescences (where the horns will presently appear) are so real that you almost fancy you can see the horns growing; and the damp nose is so natural that when you put your finger on the canvas you quite expect to find it wet.

But that is the extent of his ability. Only once did he paint a portrait; he succeeded in persuading the deputy for the district to give him sittings. The portrait was exhibited in the Salon through the influence of some friends; but everybody who looked at it declared that he had introduced so much of the animal into the features that they expected to hear the portrait bellow like a bull!

Madame Cascamille is also an artist, her husband having taught her all he knew. But, unlike her spouse, Madame has a perfect mania for painting the human form divine. Cascamille has the utmost confidence in his wife's artistic capabilities and believes—and says it, too—that her *forte* is heads.

Of course, Madame Cascamille was anxious to be "hung," and she and her husband tried to get some celebrity to sit for his (or her) portrait; but, after that little affair of the deputy's counterfeit presentment, celebrities fought shy of the worthy pair. They could have had nobodies by the score, but they wanted a somebody, so that all who saw the portrait would be able to judge of Madame's genius.

A few months prior to the opening of the Salon last year, Cascamille hinted that his wife was painting the portrait of a well-known personage for exhibition, but he would give no further particulars. It was generally regarded as a polite fiction, but sure enough it was announced in due course that both husband and wife were to be represented at the Salon; the former by an animal study—as usual—the latter by a portrait.

Speculation was rife among their friends (and enemies) at Marseilles as to who could have been so foolish—that was how they put it—as to give sittings, but when questioned on the subject Cascamille only chuckled contentedly and replied: "Wait and see!"

A neighbour named Mafitas, one of those men who seem to have friends everywhere and get to know everything before other people, managed to get an advance proof of the particular page of the catalogue, but this was of no use. For all the information it contained was: "No. 69. A Portrait by Madame Cascamille," and "No. 100. An Animal Study by J. Cascamille."

Mafitas, who, although professing friendship, had a grudge against the artistic couple, determined to pay it off; with this object he left for Paris a good fortnight earlier than usual.

Varnishing day arrived. The Cascamilles were in Paris for the season, as were many of their friends from Marseilles. These latter, with Cascamille's artistic and other friends in Paris, flocked to the Salon. Madame Cascamille was indisposed—nervous excitement, no doubt—but Cascamille was there, and on exceptionally good terms with himself and everybody else. The long-kept secret would soon be known; therefore, Cascamille thought he might as well tell his friends as they arrived and thus enjoy the pleasure of watching their faces as they heard whose portrait it was. The happy man thought it was a grand triumph and was as proud as a peacock.

"How do you do?" was his salutation. "Go and look at No. 69; my wife's portrait of *me!*" And he drew himself up to his full height—five feet two—with the air of an Alexander.

He waited for each group to come out, in order to receive their congratulations on his wife's behalf.

"Splendid!" exclaimed a lady friend who was the first to pass out. "*So* lifelike."

Cascamille beamed with delight.

"Never saw anything so natural!" was the verdict of a neighbour from Marseilles. "Only a wife could have done the thing so naturally!"

And so it went on. At length it began to dawn upon Cascamille that the compliments were rather overdone. Just then up came the last of his friends.

"Cascamille, my boy," he said, slapping the artist on the back, "it's like looking at you. I could almost hear you grunt!"

Without waiting to reply, the artist rushed into the room to look at No. 69. Horror! Some rascal had changed the tickets bearing the numbers, and, to his dismay, he found that No. 69 was his own study of a full-grown pig, while his portrait was No. 100, "An Animal Study!"

The Cascamilles do not live at Marseilles now.

Geo Day.

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WHEN THE BIRDS BEGIN TO SING.

By Winifred Graham. *Author of "Through the Valley," "Six First-Class Passengers," etc.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

No footstep stirred—the hated world all slept,
Save only thee and me. (Oh, Heaven! Oh, God!)

The following morning Eleanor, her face bright with smiles, kisses Carol as she bids him adieu.

"Shoot something nice for dinner, dear," she says, "and have a good day."

She waves her hand as he trots down the hill, his slim form erect, his eyes bright and lips parted.

"I hope you won't be dull, Eleanor," he cries with a gay laugh. "Keep house till I return, and take care of yourself."

As he fades from sight she turns singing into the bungalow.

There are several duties to be attended to. Her pink muslin gown needs rearranging, and the huge bunch of crimson flowers Quamina has gathered her must be put in the drawing-room. They are bright, and will please Carol's eye.

As she places them in tall, picturesque vases, Paulina's words return with aggressive force.

The sort of woman who stays at home tending flowers! They take the pleasure from her simple task. She leaves the fallen blossoms half on a couch, half on the ground, turning from them disgusted.

Perhaps Paulina was right! Carol would find her far more of a companion if she shouldered her gun and rode off with him to the jungle; but she hates killing things.

The chase is brutal! Sport is revolting! Thus she consols herself, and sends Quamina for the muslin gown.

How tenderly Carol had kissed her when he said good-bye. How brilliant he seemed that morning!

She laughs again at the thought of his wit. Her Carol was always clever.

He has marked a passage of Spencer's in a novel Eleanor is reading; she picks it up and comes across it.

It is like a rude shock. Why has he pencilled such disagreeable lines?

Full little knowest thou that hast not tride,
What hell it is in suing long to bide;
To loose good dayes that might be better spent,
To waste long nights in pensive discontent.

Perhaps it struck him as so strangely different to their ideal existence.

The hours do not seem long, for a "light heart goes all the day," but as afternoon wanes she is filled with expectant delight, awaiting Carol's advent. He will be naturally tired, and she draws the couch near the window, piles luxurious pillows upon it, and perches herself at the end of it, placing in readiness a loose lounging coat of yellow Tussore silk. Carol, it *is* a pretty name, she thinks, taking up his portrait and pressing it to her lips. It is in the same attitude as the one she destroyed in the railway train, upon her first meeting with Elizabeth Kachin's mother.

The faint light slants across the verandah, and falls on the yellow cushions placed for Quinton.

It creeps into the room, and sheds a halo round the striking likeness she still holds in her hand.

Eleanor gazes at the Oriental splendour, the beauties of which no utterance is capable of expressing, and indulges in visions that are pleasant and soothing, marvelling at a scene she has admired a thousand times before, and recalling memories of sweet caresses and whispered words.

Filmy shadows fall from the trees without, gradually outlining themselves upon the walls of the room, and the steps from the verandah. The hot air rises from the valley.

Eleanor breathes the tropical atmosphere and sighs. She loosens her gown at the throat, and waves an enormous palm-leaf fan leisurely backwards and forwards. The air stirs the soft hair on her forehead, cooling her brow.

She raises her eyes to the clock and smiles.

"He will soon return," she thinks. "It is growing late, and he promised to be home before nightfall."

She goes out on to the verandah, gazing down the road which leads to Mandalay.

Two or three black children are resting by a well at the foot of the hill, one squatting on the ground hugging his knees, the others standing in easy graceful attitudes, with round pitchers on their heads.

The well is beneath a huge palm. Eleanor has sometimes "wished" by it with Carol, pretending there is some mystic spell in the water.

He will pass that charmed spot as he returns, and she will stand on the steps to greet him.

Surely in all the world Carol could not have chosen a more romantic retreat in which to live and love!

The shadows deepen, they take forms, and glide from place to place, as daylight dies.

She peers into the gloom, the children go home to bed. Carol is not in sight!

The red flowers of the morning lie withered up and brown on the floor where she has left them. Carol must not be greeted by the sight of her negligence. She stoops down, and gathers them together in both hands, sweeping the dust and fallen petals into her white palm. Crossing slowly to the door, Eleanor calls Quamina.

"Take these away," she says.

Quamina looks anxiously into her face, as she relieves her young mistress of the dead blossoms.

"The Sahib is long in returning," she volunteers, with a nervous leer.

"Yes. We shall soon need a light."

"The devil will not catch him this evening; the devil is well employed," Quamina assures her. "Have no fear, lady."

"What do you mean?" asks Eleanor, a shade of anger crossing her face.

Quamina looks up proudly, delightedly.

"I have placed food and drink in the rock away from the roadside," she replies, chuckling. "He will be busy eating, and never see the Sahib riding up the path. Quamina loves the Sahib and his white lady; she will provide for the devil."

Eleanor shrugs her shoulders in sheer despair. She cannot bring this woman to reason. With a pitying smile she returns to the window, and buries her fingers in the soft silk of those yellow pillows with an almost frantic clutch. They are just like the sofa cushions at Lyndhurst. Philip, perhaps, is lounging on them now, or Erminie—he has given them to Mrs. Lane for her new drawing-room.

She kneels for a while on the lounge, and though there is no sound her lips move.

Thus she stays, directly opposite the open window, listening and looking, wondering and praying.

Can some evil have befallen him? She remembers his displeasure when she rode out to meet him that night—the man with the black mask.

There is a loud report in the room: she springs to her feet with a cry. It is only a string of her guitar which has broken, and she sinks back into the old attitude despairingly.

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Quamina is pounding rice in the kitchen. Eleanor calls to her to stop. She fancies the sound may prevent her hearing the first fall of a horse's hoofs in the distance, for the moon has not risen yet, and she cannot see far.

So she remains perfectly still, waiting for the pale light to rise in the heavens, while crowds of unutterable fancies rush through her brain—a mad disorder of thought.

She stares outwards, as one in the fetters of an awful dream.

"Why does he not come to her?"

Some well-known words recur to her brain. "The eye, like a shattered mirror, multiplies the images of its sorrow, and sees, in innumerable far-off places, the woe which is close at hand."

There is a hot and heavy vapour in the air—it seems to poison Eleanor as she inhales it in her lungs. A settled apathy pervades her spirit. For some moments she feels nothing, has not a thought—only a strange ringing in her head. The landscape before her looks desolate and terrible, an unredeemed dreariness darkens her soul like a London fog—thick, stifling.

London! The word recalls Philip, the man whose home she shattered, whose life she ruined—for Carol's sake. It was easy to deal the blow, to forget the world, to forfeit her good name when love's overpowering fascination was the bait. She can annihilate that black past in the light of Carol's smile, but when he is absent, and night is on the earth and in her heart, then the spectre rises, points his deadly finger at her quivering soul, and she realises the hideous dropping off of the veil. Her mind is a chaos of ruins. She calls to Carol in vain; only the shrill cry of some night bird through the air, and the beating of her pulses, answer that he will not come!

The gaunt form of a four-footed beast steals across the shadows she has watched so long, that she almost doubts her senses. Can it be a tiger perchance come forth from the jungle to prowl around her home?

She looks again, a thrill of horror darting through her trembling body.

The beast creeps with a soft and stealthy tread up the verandah steps—it is long and yellow.

Eleanor stares in mesmeric terror at its fiery eyes.

Then she sees it is a dog—a huge sandy mastiff, with hanging jaws, wet with foam, a great square head, and broad noiseless feet. It shambles nearer, appearing so suddenly out of the gloom that it seems to materialise before her vision. It watches her as if about to spring; she cannot remember it is not a tiger after all.

Eleanor sickens with fear, a dizzy faintness numbs her nerves, the room swims round. Her breath comes in quick gasps from a throat parched and dry as with desert sand.

She stares dumbly into its glistening eyes that look like coals of fire in the dark.

Those moments seem to be long hours; they are spells of invisible woe; this dog is perhaps a phantom, come to warn her of some ghastly peril into which Carol has fallen. Its fangs look ripe for human gore; it pants, and its breath is as the rush of a storm.

"Help!" says a low voice, calling the dog by name.

The animal turns at the sound of that word. "Help! come back." He crouches away disappointed; he would have liked to seize Eleanor by the throat if he dared.

At the sound of the man's call Eleanor does not move, nor even start, only the blood seems to dry up in her veins, her fingers twitch convulsively, her eyes roll back in her head. She can hear the heavy footfalls mounting the steps to the verandah one by one; she dares not look, for she *knows*, she *understands!*

Then a sudden idea seizes her. They are not yet face to face. If her paralysed limbs will let her she may yet escape through the room, and out behind. She can hide in the thick undergrowth, and watch her opportunity to creep down the road and warn Carol of the danger threatening their lives. He may even now be passing the well and riding up the hill to death!

She rushes blindly across the room, but that instance the heavy steps reach the verandah. Her aim is frustrated. She staggers against the wall, extending her arms aloft with a wild gesture.

The intruder stands in the open window, his dark figure framed in the line between the verandah and the interior, his face illuminated by the moon which has burst like a ghostly lamp-man over the east. She feels like one dazed in the trammels of opium. She tries to cry out, to shriek for help, but only one word breaks hoarsely from her lips with a hollow groan.

"Philip!"

The man enters the room silently, his garments are thick with dust, his coat torn as with jungle briars sharply thorned. He looks as if he had lived in the outer air, unkempt, dishevelled! Thick black hair has grown over the lower part of his face; but his eyes gleam as they meet hers while he advances, his gaze riveted on Eleanor. A fierce growl makes him turn, and his eyes fall on the lounging coat of Tussore silk lying upon yellow cushions.

"Help" has scented it, and springing with his huge paws towards the sofa, tears and rends it furiously in his heavy jaws with the savage air of a lion destroying prey.

The sight is strangely horrible to Eleanor. Her eyes start from their sockets, staring, bloodshot, fixed. Her lips are livid, her limbs stiff, she is still drawn up against the wall at bay; but for its support she would fall upon the ground.

Philip smiles. The action of the dog pleases him.

He does not notice the photograph of Carol which dropped from Eleanor's hands as she started across the room, but the heel of his dusty boot falls on the face, crushing it under the weight of his tread, scarring the features and cracking the card. He advances and stands passively before Eleanor, so close that his hot breath fans her cheek, looking at her and waiting.

The steady ticking of the clock resounds in the room; in that moment of extreme tension it deafens her.

The silence is horrible, unendurable; she struggles to break it, and her voice sounds to her own amazement perfectly natural.

"I know why you have come, Philip," she says calmly, and it seems that she has lived through this moment in some past existence, so painfully familiar are the ghastly occurrences of to-night. Perhaps it was in some shadowy dream which faded from her memory on awaking. "I know why you are here," she repeats, throwing back her head against the bamboo panelling, and stretching out her arms in the attitude of a crucified victim. "I read it in your face. But I am too young to die, too sin-stained."

"You think I have come to kill you, Eleanor?"

His words are low and hollow; they seem strangely similar to the warning growl of his huge dog. She thinks he has grown to resemble the ferocious-looking beast, or "Help," in the moonlight, appears like his master—from perpetual companionship.

But even as she looks, something of the man creeps into Philip's eyes, humanising them. The brute nature fades.

She answers his question under her breath:

"Yes, you have hunted me down to take my life."

An expression of intense pain contracts his features; she has cut him to the quick.

With a woman's sharp instinct, intensified by dread, Eleanor sees that her doom is not yet; but the thought of another burns like fire in her brain. Her own miserable thread of life, what does it matter? She holds it as nought compared with the one she loves. She would die a thousand deaths if such a sacrifice would buy him safety.

"How little you understand me!" he says at last. "It was always so."

"Why have you come?" she asks, faintly tracing the shadows that fall around him in the pallid moonlight.

He turns, as if in answer, to the scattered rags of a silken coat, some of which still hang in the mastiff's jaws; then his gaze travels through the verandah, down the zig-zag path, towards the jungle.

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Eleanor interprets the look. With a swift movement she wrenches herself from the wall against which she has seemed to be held as if by a strong magnet, crosses the room with quick and noiseless tread, fastens the folding window doors together with a click, facing Philip in defiant silence.

"You have come for him," she hisses, the hatred in her eyes gleaming forth. "You would kill—Carol."

At the mention of his name from her lips Philip starts.

"Is it not so?" she cries wildly, raising her voice, which trembles with emotion, vibrates with dread.

For the moment Philip does not reply, only his face lights up as with the glory of revenge.

Eleanor's fingers tighten on the window fastening. She clings to it for support.

A strangled cry breaks from her lips, and the half incoherent words: "My God! My God!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

Oh, I defy thee, Hell, to show
On beds of fire that burn below,
. . . . . a deeper woe.—E. A. Poe.

Philip pushes a chair forward as if to signify there is no need to guard the window.

The action excites Eleanor to passion.

"It is cowardly to kill," she cries through her clenched teeth.

"And if I did, what should I get in return for all he has stolen from me? Could he give me back your heart? Could he blot out the past with his blood? Should I regain the pure thing I lost, the wife I treasured, the woman I adored? Think how he shattered my life and wrecked my happiness, when he enticed you with the golden apple, that rots and decay, turning to wormwood between the lips! You were allured by the seductive cajolery, the damnable influence of a scoundrel."

Eleanor's breast heaves, she staggers forward in a frenzy.

"Stop! What you say is false. I was not 'enticed.' I went because I loved him body and soul; because existence without him was empty—impossible. If I had stayed with you, loving him, I should not have been true to myself. I should have played the traitor in my own home; the curse would have been on you and on your children. If such a thing were possible, here in this new land, my passion developed, increased ten-fold. The night and day, the light, the darkness, they hold nothing for me but this rapturous love, all that is precious, tender, sweet. I have fed on in this paradise till *you* came, like an image of death, to bring back all that is odious, hateful."

"Yes," he replies slowly, "I can believe you were happy, clinging to the prize you held so dear. Your words have not surprised me. I have listened to them so often in fancy, picturing this scene, when you and I alone should stand together and bare our souls. I expected to hear your short-lived rapture hurled at me as a shield, a fortification! I am ready to judge it, to weigh it if you will in the scales of right and wrong. Will you not continue?"

His words wither Eleanor's defence; she shrinks back into herself.

"Surely you have something more to say," with an ironical laugh, that re-echoes discordantly round the room.

She shakes her head mournfully, and drops her hands to her sides.

"Perhaps," he continues, "I was to blame. I was not in harmony with you; I failed to please."

"Oh! Philip!"

The words are a protest, rung from the bottom of her soul.

"Or I did not place sufficient confidence in you; we had 'family jars,' 'vexed questions,' 'disagreements.'"

"Philip, for pity's sake——"

He runs his fingers through the grey hair, lying moist upon his sun-bronzed brow. The crow's feet of sorrow furrow the corners of his eyes, which are stern, but not angry. They have looked for the last time on the golden season of life, now they stare at Eleanor as if reading in her face the key of the everlasting twilight that has fallen on his days.

Instinctively she cowers back, hiding her burning face in her hands, red with a flush of deepest shame.

"Don't shrink from me," he says. "It is almost incomprehensible, Eleanor, but——"

She looks up quickly.

"Ever since you left me I have had no thought but you. In life's morning you were my love, my all. I could not tear you from my heart had I wished to. But I never tried."

"Is that possible?" she gasps incredulously. "You must indeed have loved me!"

"I may be mad, but it is so. I love you now in your degradation, and misery, in spite of all!"

The confession staggers her.

"And you show it by hunting me down to destroy my happiness. You must have sought long to find me here, and now that you are successful, now that I am run to earth, what will you do?"

"What do you *think?*"

His face becomes fiendish. She watches his sinister smile.

"I have told you what I believe you capable of—you will murder him. I know it. You have no pity! The love you boast of is swallowed up in hate."

An evil flame lights his mocking eyes.

"Yes, I might spring at his throat as he comes from the jungle, I might set 'Help' upon him in the dark. He is a weak man easily unnerved. The very sight of this knife——"

"Ah!"

Philip has drawn a sharp blade of steel from his coat and flashed it in the moonlight, with a bitter groan.

He replaces it at the sight of her terror, with something of regret in his hard smile.

"What false professions!" sneers Eleanor. "You dare to speak of loving me, when you would rob me of the man in whom all my happiness lies!"

Philip winces as if suddenly recalled to facts.

"Yes, your whole future was controlled by him."

His words fill her with a vague misgiving, but she draws herself up proudly and replies:

"It is safe in Carol's keeping."

"You are sure of that?"

She bows a cold assent.

"Then listen, Eleanor." He speaks authoritatively. "Come here. Sit down."

He points to a chair, but she sinks on the edge of the sofa, too agitated to notice her proximity to the huge mastiff.

"There is need of explanation," Philip continues, never taking his eyes off her white, scared face. "It is time you understood me. You say I have 'run you to earth,' as if through this long period of separation I had been hunting you like a bloodhound, and suddenly found myself on your track. You imagine I have just discovered you."

Eleanor's lips part as if to speak, but the words are choked back in her throat. "Help" stirs his head, for the first time she sees he is at her feet.

"You recall," says Philip, "that small dog—a suspicious Irish terrier—you were given some time back?"

"What of him? How did you know?" turning her eyes wonderingly from "Help" to Philip.

"It was killed in some bushes by a wild beast, when you were riding one day with your lover."

"Yes."

He pauses.

The mastiff rises slowly, and stretches himself, as if wearied by his day's work.

Eleanor draws her skirts away from contact with his coarse hair.

She sees it all at last.

"Killed," she repeats, "and by your dog."

Her breath comes quicker, she turns and peers through the window, as if expecting something.

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"There is still more," declares Philip. "That cat's-eye ring I gave you, Eleanor—where is it?"

His voice pulses with suppressed force.

"Carol was attacked in the jungle one night——"

"By a masked fiend, who tore him from his horse, and shook him by the throat, like a cat with a mouse, then flung him aside as a scorpion too poisonous to touch—a foul thing, only fit to lie beneath a rock, hidden from the sight of man. When he rose up, his assailant had gone, like a silent ghost on that lonely road."

Philip holds his lean fingers before her eyes, and flashing on one of them gleams the greenish light of the cat's-eye gem.

Again Eleanor looks fearfully out into the night, she fancies she hears Carol on the steps below.

"While you have been basking in your 'paradise,' dreaming your short-lived vision of love, I have watched and waited, prowling to and fro with 'Help,' a faithful servant, at my heels. Your dog scented me, he proclaimed my presence, so I let 'Help' silence him once and for all. Many a night when you sat together, there in that verandah, your hand linked in his ringless fingers, your eyes feasting on his false face, I crouched below, watching. Did you never feel my nearness? Ah, you shudder! It *was* strange—very strange. It maddened me that he should wear your ring—my ring—so I wrenched it from him."

She listens like one in the thralls of a hideous nightmare. If Carol comes now—he is lost!

"Why, when I had him by the throat," asks Philip, "did I not strangle the life from his body? Why did I stay my hand? How was it I watched your happiness with hungry eyes, and did not strike? I could have shot you dead in each other's arms scores of times. I inexorably determined on his death, but held the sword suspended, like Damocles, by a single hair."

She listens acutely to his every syllable.

"Why?" she stammers feebly, her mind groping in the dark.

"So long as he was faithful to you—so long as he valued what you flung at his feet, I would not wake you from your Elysium. By this I *proved* the love you discredit. My action should not plunge you into an abyss of woe; but *now* that he is false—*false as Hell*——"

"Liar!" breaks in Eleanor hotly; "your miserable accusation is unfounded."

"Wait. When he left you for long days of 'sport,' what do you think was the nature of that chase?"

Eleanor is silent, numbed by dread and despair.

"His game—was a woman, who knew from his lips your whole history. I have seen them together for hours at a time—heard them speak—jest at your expense. But, in spite of this, she was jealous of you, and, but for a bad shot, would have taken your life that day in the jungle, when I killed her horse under her. You see I was guarding you, Eleanor. He has been scheming to go away with her; to desert you as a toy that is broken—a flower which has lost its scent."

She leaps to her feet, and flings open the window.

"You are hoodwinking me with a trumped-up story; it is not true!"

"Hear me out. He is serving you as you treated me. It is retribution. You forfeited his respect and consideration. He gave you only the brief glamour of his passion, which has died, to re-live in the smiles of 'Paulina.'"

"Philip, these lies are dastardly—cruel! You do not know what you are saying."

"You cling hard to your faith!" he retorts savagely, her staunchness to Carol awaking a fever of indignation within him. "Did I ever in the old days deserve that hard term 'liar'?"

She shakes her head. "Oh, no!"

"You are waiting for him to-night, Eleanor. He had promised, I believe, to return?"

She gazes down the slanting road.

"Yes. He is late." Then, with a sudden cry: "And when he comes—oh! Philip, I had not realised it—your revenge! What can I do to save him? Anything—I care not what! I will go and leave him—I will kill myself here before your eyes, as a ransom! You are mistaken, he is *not* false to me; any moment he may arrive. Only spare his life, for the love of Heaven!"

She falls on her knees at Philip's feet, beating the air with her hands.

He raises her gently, but firmly.

"You need not look," he says, as her terrified eyes stare out at the moonlit scene, white and ghostly. "Yesterday he wrote to the woman Paulina, making all arrangements for their flight this night. She dropped the letter in the jungle, from a satchel full of shot. It is here."

He holds out the torn envelope, with its broken seal and deadly intelligence.

Eleanor takes it mechanically—as yet she cannot believe—while the sight of the familiar handwriting sends the hot blood coursing freely once more through her brain.

She draws the closely-worded sheet from its resting-place and crosses to the light to scan the text.

Philip watches her face as it bends over the letter. He has struck a match and holds it up to illuminate that fatal message.

Every vestige of life seems to fly from her features. The page swims before her failing sight, the words become crossed and blurred. She has read enough!

Then she remembers Paulina's fingers have touched this paper, perhaps her lips, and it flutters from Eleanor's hands at the thought, falling silently between her and Philip.

"Now," he cries, "can you grasp my mission? Do you guess why I am here? There was no longer any cause for him to live." Philip throws back his coat, and she sees the shirt beneath it is splashed with blood.

He takes her icy hand and draws her towards the verandah.

"I killed him at sunset," he whispers, pointing outwards, "over there, on that far hill. When night came I bore him back to you. Now in the moonlight, down near the well, or to-morrow at dawn in the rosy glow, you will find your lover. His set face is looking up from the long grass, his last word was 'Paulina!'"

Eleanor staggers to the rails, and points towards the well.

She seems struggling to speak, but there is only a low gurgle in her throat.

Philip stands on the steps. "'Help,'" he says abruptly, calling the dog. "Come."

Together the man and beast pass like visions into the night.

* * * * *

Eleanor crouches away to the far corner of the verandah, her limbs relax, and she huddles herself in a heap on the hard ground, without a cry, without a moan.

* * * * *

Another day breaks gloriously over the East, in the first rays of sunlight Eleanor stirs. With difficulty she rises from her cramped position, a shudder runs over her frame as she walks unsteadily down the steps, in the direction of the well.

The jungle fowl on tree and ground give forth their sharp shrill cries.

The bulbul whistles sweet notes like those of a thrush.

The golden oriole with its bright yellow plumage whirrs as a flash of sunlight through the trees, and the birds at home are singing.

The End.

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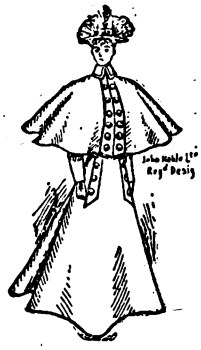

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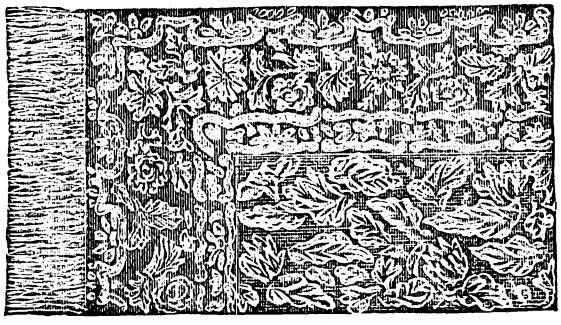

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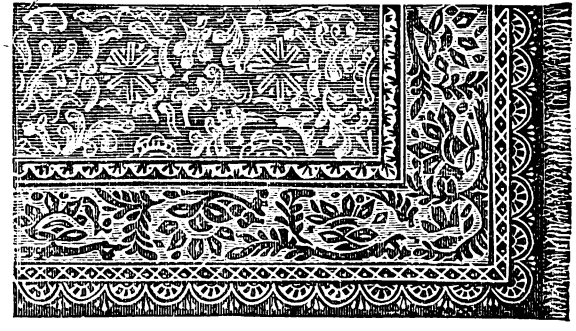

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No. 382. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 25TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY

C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 382.] For the Week ending April 25th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

The Suicide of Julian Sorel.

From the Italian of Matilde Serao.

He went slowly up the Via Nazionale, moving with difficult steps, and upon his handsome, pale face, worn and altered, was the look of mortal lassitude. He went with downcast eyes, and hands hanging loose at his sides, jostled, pushed by people in haste, and he seemed to see nothing, to feel nothing, only every now and then there sounded in passing the whistle of the train which goes from the Piazza Venezia to Termini, and Julian Sorel started at the sharp note, stopped and looked with his wan and sadly-wearied eyes at the car, jolting upon the rails with a dull crash.

Then Julian Sorel resumed his way, always more slowly, stopping to look at the shop windows, of which the gloss was dimmed by the heavy dampness of that morning in March; but his eyes had the vacancy, the cold stupefaction, of those of a man who does not see. Yet he remained several minutes before a display of toys, looking at a row of dolls, with hair blonde as tow, eyes bluer than any blue sky, cheeks pinker than any rose; dolls in lace-trimmed nightdresses, or sumptuously clad in satin and velvet; dolls wrapped in furs like Russian great ladies; dolls with their outfit and furniture.

A cloud of tears rose to veil the dry eyes of Julian Sorel, before all that blonde beauty richly clothed, before those rosy creatures loaded with adornments of luxury, and he was obliged to lean against the window-frame of the shop, in order not to fall. Then he walked on more depressed than before. But although his step was that of a man who has not strength to reach his aim, or fears to reach it, he arrived at the corner of Via Torino, where he was to turn. He stopped, remained motionless, as if incapable of arriving at the grey villa, which was already seen amid the slender group of green trees that surrounded it. Now an expression of fear was added upon his face to the profound weariness evident there; the pretty villa arising amid the boughs frightened him.

He was a prey to a thousand hesitations as he traversed the short space of the street; his hand, pressing the white button of the electric bell, trembled.

A serving-man, still in his morning jacket, and with a blue cotton apron before him, came to open the door.

"Is the signora still asleep?" asked Julian Sorel, with a weak, broken voice, sadly hoping for an affirmative reply.

"No, Eccellenza; she called her maid an hour ago."

The servant had given him, it is true, the title of Eccellenza, but he had looked with such easy coolness, had preceded him with such indifference, without even looking to see if Julian Sorel followed him, that the latter quivered with pain, perceiving at once, with his morbid sensitiveness, the shade of contempt in the servant. Julian Sorel has traversed a large ante-room and two parlours, furnished with the most expensive luxury, in the most correct and artistic taste, and had stopped in the hall, a room like a conservatory, all covered by glass and veiled by thin, but impenetrable, curtains of Oriental gauze, full of the rarest plants and the richest and most fantastic furniture, soft skins spread upon the floor, and exotic flowers rising from vases of choice porcelain, of delf or china.

The air was warm, and a strange, inebriating perfume was in the atmosphere. Seated in a bamboo armchair, with elbows resting on his knees and his head leaning on his hands, he abandoned himself, so to say, to utter depression, without raising his head, without even hearing the light step of Gwendoline Harris; and the blonde, slender woman stood before him, looked at him

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with her cold and brilliant blue eyes—bluer than the skies—passing her pink, taper fingers over the fluttering white feathers with which was trimmed her gown of white wool, all embroidered with silver like a priestly stole.

"Then?" asked the fresh, clear-cut voice of the woman.

"Oh, Gwendoline!" he murmured, becoming paler still, unable to bear the gaze of those icy blue eyes.

She extended herself, all white, upon a white divan, covered with cushions of white silk so soft that she sank among them. There were to be seen the two little feet clad in slippers of white velvet, edged with feather trimming, and her thin stockings of black silk, lightly embroidered in silver. The mass of her blonde hair was held up by a large comb, all studded with small pearls, and two great white pearls hung from her ears. She played with the filaments of the feather trimming of her gown softly, as a bird that smoothes its plumage. The pink of her skin was truly pinker than any rose.

"Then?" she asked again of Julian Sorel.

He dared not reply, and looked at her with eyes of intreaty. Gwendoline shook her blonde head slightly, and began to play with her gleaming rings, that covered every finger up to the first joint, like an Egyptian idol.

"Then the affair has gone wrong?" Gwendoline then asked with her pure crystalline voice.

"Wrong," he answered feebly.

"For ever?"

"For ever," he repeated, like a fatal echo.

No impression of wonder, of sadness, of pity came to trouble that pink face of the woman, that clear-cut and calm forehead, those eyes like a frosty heaven.

"You are a dead man," she declared coldly.

"Yes, indeed," said Julian Sorel, ashen of face as a corpse.

"What are you come to do here? This is not a cemetery, and none of my antique caskets can serve you as a coffin," said Gwendoline without anger, breathing upon one of her opal rings to make it shine.

"I came to salute you for the last time."

"And yesterday evening did I not say adieu to you? Did not you understand it?"

"I did not understand it, and I hoped, from the banker Colzada this morning——" he stammered humbly.

"A useless hope; no one gives money to the dead."

"You are right," he said in a low tone, with bent head.

She watched him strangely. It seemed as if she were measuring the moral depth of that depression, and wished to know of what that immense weakness would be capable. He was silent, lost, exhausted.

"To what figure do your debts amount?" she asked all at once in her clear, cold voice.

Julian Sorel lifted his head, and looked at Gwendoline as in a dream—as if he had not heard or understood.

"To what figure do your debts amount?" she repeated, dominating him with her blue eyes.

"I don't know . . . I don't know . . . do not talk to me about it," he begged her, shuddering, passing one hand across his brow.

"You owe two hundred and seventy thousand lire. I reckoned the sum."

It seemed as if the syllables of this hard phrase beat, every one, upon the brain of the unhappy man, for his face altered.

"And you have not a soldo to pay with; and you have no more resources; you have exhausted all of them; and you have no hope of inheritance, for all your relatives are dead; no hope in your work, because you do not know how to work; you have been a man given to love and to pleasure; no hope of business, of speculation, because within a month, a week, you will be a bankrupt, a defaulter."

"Gwendoline, if you love me, be silent, be silent."

"I do not love you," she said quietly.

"If you ever cared for me be silent, do not kill me."

"I never cared for you," she persisted, proudly contracting her beautiful lips, red and fresh.

Julian Sorel looked at her with such new despair in his eyes that the haughty woman smiled with pride.

"Sometimes—you have told me that you cared for me," he stammered.

"I told a falsehood, naturally," she explained, "and you know that very well. It pleased you to have me tell falsehoods, that is all."

"Yes, it is true, your falsehood was my happiness."

"And so," she concluded, "you have spent all that you possessed, and you have made two hundred and seventy thousand lire of debts to pay for that falsehood. For that falsehood you go to your death."

"To my death," he repeated, opening his arms, with the gesture of final despair.

"It was a sweet and beautiful falsehood, let us say so," resumed Gwendoline, crossing her pretty feet, finely shod with dainty black and white, "and 'tis worth the trouble of dying for. Do not hope that your creditors will give you truce! You owe between fifty and sixty thousand lire to Giacomo Levi, to Francesco Sangiorgio, to Giovanni Lamarca, your friends, whom you have made your enemies for ever, and who persecute you worse than the money-lenders, Pietro Toscano and Angelo Cabib, to whom you owe less, much less, but the interest has mounted up so high! You are in debt, too, to the Parisian milliners, Worth, Morin, and Redfern, all for dresses, for me, and they have given you credit because you had spent with them the half of your fortune; you owe the Italian dressmakers, Bellom, Pontecorro, the Boria sisters, Tua; you owe all the jewellers, Marchesni here, and Franconeri at Naples; you owe all the dealers in furniture and elegant *bric-à-brac*, Janetti, Cajiata, Maria Beretta, also Guglianetti, of Milan; all these have given you credit, because you have bought so much of them before. But they want their money, and they are right; why should they lose it? They are worthy people."

"Gwendoline, Gwendoline, do not be pitiless; be silent, be silent, I am dying," he cried, with his eyes wild with acute pain.

"Do you know what is the balance of accounts for the beautiful sweet falsehood?" she continued, as if she had not heard him. "A million and eight hundred thousand lire. You, I imagine, have not even the money to buy a revolver."

"I have not," he moaned, from his abyss of sorrow.

"One million eight hundred thousand lire, and to be obliged to resort to an economical suicide, a poor little suicide—that of the beggars and the forsaken servant maids—in the river, the Tiber!" she murmured with a vague smile, as if she were speaking to herself.

He raised towards her his painfully stupified gaze. And Gwendoline understood the meaning of that amazement.

"You are now telling yourself that I am a monster of cruelty."

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"I am not saying anything," stammered the weak creature.

"You say it. And you are wrong. Let us balance our accounts, for we are never to see each other again. You, what did you want of me?"

"That you should love me—that I might be your lover, your servant, your friend."

"And I, what have I asked of you?"

"Nothing."

"And you have given me everything in order to be loved or that I should feign to love you. That is the balance of accounts. Now I, to show you that I am not cruel, can only give you one piece of wise advice—kill yourself. You had a fortune, you have it no longer; you had a woman, you have her no longer; you had honour, it is shipwrecked; you have a fine and delicate soul, a sensitive mental heart, and you have, together with all that, a need to enjoy, to be happy, which is your greatest need; you cannot, then, combat against poverty, abandonment, and dishonour. Kill yourself! kill yourself. You cannot save yourself otherwise. For what should you live? He who kills himself pays his debts; he who kills himself has no more need of honour, nor love, nor money; he who kills himself conquers supreme peace. You have nothing more to do in the world; go out of it, into the common grave, where there are no creditors, and where there will not appear any more the divine and cursed blue eyes that were the cause of your death."

They flashed, those blue eyes, with these last words. Julian Sorel looked at them and drank from them deadly poison. Julian Sorel heard the clear and fatal voice, and felt in his heart its mortal and lugubrious vibrations.

"It is two months since I decided to kill myself when there should no longer be any remedy," he said faintly.

"You have waited too long; go, go and throw yourself into the Tiber," she said, looking at him, hypnotising him, giving him the suggestion of love, grief, terror.

"I am going," said Julian Sorel, and he rose.

But he did not take a step. She still looked at him, in order to conquer him entirely in his infinite weakness.

"Go, go; you will be happier dead," Gwendoline told him again.

"Give me a kiss," he asked humbly, kneeling before the divan where she lay, not to give her the annoyance of rising.

She turned slightly towards the kneeling man, took his head between her slender, jewelled hands, and placed her beautiful fresh lips upon his forehead. And it seemed that again, in that long kiss, the lips of Gwendoline said to him:

"Go, go, you will be happier dead."

* * * * *

Going down the Via Nazionale, Julian Sorel went to death. He no longer dragged his limbs wearily, but neither did he hasten; he did not stop before certain shop-windows, but the eyes that he fixed upon the passers had the same painful expression of sightlessness; he did not start now when the whistle of the train sounded, but the pallor of his face had become livid.

The dying man had received the final wound; but a way had been pointed out to him and he was going there, without haste, but fatally, by the blue, icy light of two divine eyes which led him, to the funereal sound of a crystalline voice of a woman which accompanied him, with the caress of two slender hands upon his brow and hair with the last kiss of the speaking lips, the last kiss and the last words pervading his brain, his soul, his heart, all his being.

Now, as he walked, Julian Sorel thought only to what point of the great Tiber he should go to throw himself in. Gwendoline Harris had not told him that. Not at Pipetta, for the bridge is too much frequented by day, and there are the landings for the shell row-boats, and a suicide is always a failure there; not at the Albero Bello, because there are too many vessels loaded with Sicilian wine; where, then?

He remembered an evening in August, in which, passing through Rome with Gwendoline Harris, on the way from Vienna to Sorrento, they had gone to Ponte Molle, like citizens, like all who are obliged to remain in Rome for the summer; and they had walked up and down along the river, towards the vast meadows of Tor di Quinto, towards the shady Via Angelica; Gwendoline was dressed in soft, white silk, as always, all in white, and had had a large, light mantle of white wool; yes, yes, he would die at Ponte Molle, towards Tor di Quinto, or by the shore of Via Angelica; it was still she who suggested to him this idea. He was at Piazza Venezia when he decided.

He took his way by the Corso to the right. Some one saluted him; he did not recognise who it might be, and passed on. Several stopped him, they were creditors for small or great sums, and the demand varied, now brutal, now whining, but insistent, implacable. They had known him to be rich and had given him credit, and they believed that he still had money, believed that he denied them from unwillingness. All the passage by the Corso was one long torture for him, an unmerited, unjust torture, since, indeed, he was going to die at this place, amid a concert of voices, of words, of phrases that all told him seeking his money: "Go, go, throw yourself into the river; you will be happier dead."

So when he had nearly reached the Piazza del Popolo there was hardly anyone about; and that increasing solitude calmed him a little, as he took the muddy walk that leads by the Via Flaminia, along the Parioli hills, to Ponte Molle.

No one in the little café where the cab-drivers and carters stop; no one in the little taverns that sprout up every few steps, until the middle of the Via Flaminia; no one in the lonely fields, all a desert of mud, where hardly grew some blackish, stunted trees. He thought whether he ought to write something before dying, an explanation, a salute; and a new wave of despair suffocated him; he had no one, no one to whom to write, not a relative, or a friend, or an acquaintance; no one would mourn or curse him except his creditors; he had lived for enjoyment, only for sake of love, luxury, pleasure; and so he died for these things, bearing in his soul as a last farewell the words of Gwendoline Harris, for whom he had spent a million and eight hundred thousand lire, the words with which she had told him to kill himself, because he would be happier dead. No one, no one, not his mother, not a sister, a betrothed, a friend, nothing, nothing—not a human tear for him; and the final scene of his life, in that great solitude and silence of the Roman Campagna, on that forlorn March day, walking and sinking in the mud, was the worthy completion of his existence.

All at once he felt a push against his leg. He turned. A dog was following him, and he turned to look at it. It was a very ugly, very dirty, lean dog, that appeared as if he had upon him ten days of vagabondage and hunger amid the mud of the Campagna; a disgusting dog. Where had he come from? Julian Sorel could

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not have told. There were no more houses on the Via Flaminia; perhaps he had run out, unnoticed, from the lane of the Arco Scuro. He had been following, perhaps, for some time; and he looked at Julian Sorel with his kind and gentle dog's eyes.

"Go away," said the man rudely.

The dog stopped a moment, then began again to follow.

"Go away," and he gave it a kick.

The poor dog took the kick in one shoulder and howled sadly; but still looking at Julian Sorel, it still followed him. He stopped, greatly disturbed. Why did that dog follow him so obstinately even after being beaten? Why did it look at him with those eyes that seemed human, so expressive were they of pity and sorrow?

"It must be a lost, hungry dog looking for a master," he thought, as he stood contemplating that singular beast.

The dog, too, had stopped, and held its scrubby head down, patiently waiting.

"Go away, go away," Julian Sorel said to it, "I must die."

The beast raised its head and looked, with those eyes of a loving, poor, sorrowful animal. All the soul of Julian Sorel shook with fear and wonder. But *who, who* was looking at him in that tender animal gaze. What new madness of pity came to give him a final grief, a grief made of humble tenderness of a most bitter and sweet melting mood?

"I must die, I must die," he said, speaking to that beast as if to a man; "I shall be happier dead."

And he went on again, towards Ponte Molle, repressing all the tears of an unknown sadness which rose to his eyes, repressing the sharpness of a mysterious regret. The dog followed him step by step; Julian Sorel heard it behind him, walking faithfully, disgustingly ugly and dirty, half dead with hunger and fatigue, but decided to follow him, wherever the man on the way to death might wish to go. A prey to an unconquerable disturbance between an odd new despair and an odd breaking up of his entire will, Julian Sorel shuddered, hearing the animal's step, vigilant, almost inflexible in its affectionate persecution.

He would have liked to stop, strike it, throw stones at it, kill it with kicks, but the idea of encountering those tender canine eyes, so filled with human pity, frightened him. Ah, surely, surely, *someone* was looking at him through those eyes. He dared not look at them, those eyes of an animal almost as if they spoke to him of the human goodness that he had disdained, of all the human sufferings that he had despised, of all the human tears that had flowed for him in vain; he dared not look at them, as if he found in them the unknown reproof, mystic and austere, which Life makes to him who has not known how to understand her and therefore has not known how to deserve her. *Who* was looking at him, through those eyes so deep with compassion; *who* was still weeping over him, over the existence of a pleasure-loving and capricious brute that he had ever lived; *who* was weeping over that noble soul dragged in the shame of an impure love?

Ah! that beast would not go away; it followed him, it followed him until his final step, no human force could liberate him from that company.

"Let him come, then, to see me die," he thought. But at Ponte Molle they met three carts full of pozzolana that came slowly towards Rome to the melancholy whistle of the rough drivers; and towards Tor di Quinto it seemed to Julian Sorel that the land was too wide, too open, to kill himself there in the river. Better the wide and winding road of the Porta Angelica which runs under large trees, beside the great yellow river full of whirlpools and the Farnesina meadows. He would go down to the water's edge, and silently, falling rather than throwing himself in, without any noise, would die in the deep, fierce river. But the dog would perhaps throw itself into the water to save him; the dog did not wish him to die—this was the idea working in the disordered brain of Julian Sorel. And then, as if that unknown animal were a man, as if he could understand everything, Julian Sorel, in the muddy and deserted road, under the great, black, bare trees, before the wide, yellow river, cried to it desolately:

"I must die; I have two hundred and seventy thousand lire of debts and cannot pay; I must die, let me die."

The poor beast, dirty and hideous, looked at Julian Sorel with eyes full of pity, as if veiled by tears; not a voice nor a footstep throughout the wide plain, smoking with moisture from the soil of the fields; not a voice, not a boat upon the wide river with its destructive whirlpools; alone that man and that dog. That look! Did it not say, perhaps, to Julian Sorel, that humble look of an animal—that death does not save from dishonour, that it is more honest to live, working out the penalty of a great error, than to take refuge in the tomb? *Who, who* told him so, in those eyes, and in his conscience?

All his own people, who were dead at their appointed hour, quietly touched by destiny, but honoured, trusting to be mourned, told it to him, perhaps, in those eyes; all those who had loved him, and who were far away and could not save him now; all those whom he had loved in childhood, in youth, ten years, a day, an hour, they, perhaps, or their beloved shades, or their far-off tender voices, or their kind eyes thus would save him, or their caressing hands that would withhold him—they, in that look!

Conquered by an immense weakness, Julian Sorel let go himself upon the sandy bank of the river, hiding his face in the damp sand, with open arms, sobbing softly every now and then, but without tears. The dog had seated himself beside him, and laid its muddy nose upon its dirty, thin paws; and during all the while that Julian Sorel lay, stretched at full length in the fatality of life and death that fought for their prey, the poor beast did not move, keeping his eyes fixed upon the man in his agony. In agony, the weak creature who had always lived for the smile of the moment, without will, without faith, without goodness; in agony, the flaccid soul, the conquered soul, the soul impoverished by small ideas and by impure desires; in agony, the soul that had cast away the noble part of himself, that feared the penalty and would flee the chastisement—in agony!

The turbid waters of the murderous river ran, they that had borne to sea so many corpses; the funereal Roman Campagna was silent, motionless under the damp, malignant breath of March; the day was at its end. The dog softly, softly, lapped the open hand of Julian Sorel; that indistinct caress was like a breath, like a voice, like a word, was like the apparition of a phantom. The body of the man stretched out there gave a great start, and the heart truly broke in tenderness, in repentance, in pity, in the desire for human chastisement.

Then, in the frosty twilight, he returned towards Rome. Between Via Angelica and Via Triofale the dog disappeared in the shadow and Julian Sorel continued his way towards Rome—towards chastisement.

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The Dissolution of The Templars' Clique.

"Why don't—you—fellows—get—married?"

These were the astounding words, jerked out between the puffs at a pipe, that awoke me suddenly from my pleasant dreamy reverie.

The words came in appropriately enough, for I was thinking of the sweet face of a girl, to whom I had been introduced a few days ago.

There were three of us smoking and talking round the fire in our rooms in the Temple—Danvers, Brown, and myself. We were known to our friends as the "Templars' Clique," this because of our persistent resistance to the fascinations of certain fair charmers.

No words to do with matrimony had been mentioned among us for years; each one prided himself on the fact that he was a confirmed woman-hater.

We were therefore surprised and incredulous at the astounding question Brown propounded. It was the prelude to the dissolution to the Templars' Clique.

It was some time before I could grasp his meaning. I sank back in my chair, and blinked feebly at Brown. He was calmly engaged in lighting his pipe.

Danvers sprang to his feet.

"What did you say then," he cried, "will you kindly repeat yourself?"

"Why don't"—puff—"you fellows"—puff—"get married?" said Brown. There could be no mistake about his words this time.

He feigned surprise at the look on our faces, threw away his match, and settled back in his chair with his hands behind his head, evidently preparing himself for a lengthy argument.

Danvers accepted the challenge.

"What do you mean by asking such a question as that?" he said.

"Are you mad, man, or don't you know what you are saying? Does it look as if we should get married?"

I sprang on a chair in my excitement.

"Look at this room," I cried, "what do you think it would be like if a girl was here? Do you think she would allow me to stand here if I was married, eh?"

"Look at me," shrieked Danvers (he was dancing madly about). "Do you think I could go about like this if I was married? What should I do if a girl was sitting here?"

Brown had been listening patiently to our excited words. I did not like the look on his face. It seemed as if he had heard our arguments before, and was prepared with an answer for them. He looked round the room, noting every detail.

"I see," he said, "a disgracefully untidy room, filled with tobacco smoke, and—altogether repulsive."

Altogether repulsive! Brown was indeed in a bad way.

He closed his eyes and leant back in his chair.

"Now I can see," he went on, "this same room transformed by the sweet presence of a woman. It is brightly furnished, filled with flowers, and abounding with knick-knacks and tables. Two chairs are drawn to the fire."

Brown gazed steadily at Danvers to answer his questions.

"I look at you," he said, "and see an excited little man, dressed in a barbarous fashion." Brown closed his eyes again.

"*Now*," he continued, "I see a respectable, smug looking fellow, occupying one of the two chairs drawn to the fire. By his side is seated—"

"Oh, stow it," interrupted Danvers, whose patience was fast coming to an end. Then after a thoughtful pause: "Well, yes, then. By his side is seated—a girl—already tired of married life; her husband enjoys little of her society, and begins to look fondly back on his bachelor days."

Danvers laughed merrily when he remembered that he was still free.

Deep down in his heart, however, he knew he was belying the sex. A sweet name kept ringing in his ears—May Lancaster—a sweet form kept floating before his eyes, and was enframed in the tobacco rings he was blowing. It was wearing a bright blue dress to match the laughing eyes; freckles covered the childlike forehead, and two laughing dimples were on its cheeks.

I took up the train of Danvers' thoughts.

"By his side was seated a girl—whose sole object in marrying seemed to be to deprive her husband of freedom. She rules him with a firm hand, which is perhaps accounted for by the fact that she was once captain of her football team, and had ambitions of taking a degree at Oxford."

Yet all through the day I had been haunted by a face to whom I knew these words would never apply. May Lancaster! What a pretty name it was!

Suddenly an idea struck me. I sprang forward and looked Brown steadily in the eyes. I beckoned to Dangers to come and look.

"You are in love, man," we cried suddenly, "we see it in your eyes, it is written clearly on every feature. Traitor!"

Brown put his hands in his pocket and slowly drew out a photograph. He held it up to our faces.

At the sight of it Danvers sank back in his chair; and covered his face with a cushion. I reeled on to a sofa.

It was the picture of a smiling girl with light coloured eyes, who had freckles on her forehead, and on whose cheeks two charming dimples were to be seen.

Two words were scrawled across the photograph in bold character: "May Lancaster."

"She's going to marry me," Brown explained.

The Templars' Clique was dissolved.

M. Woodward.

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The doctor's wife scanned her visitor in silence. With the audacity of an out-and-out Protestant she was revolving in her mind certain impious questions. This was the third mendicant in pious garb who had come to her door within a month soliciting alms for the support of some far-away religious institution. Who was to assure her that the contributions she had already made would be faithfully dedicated to the purpose for which they had been given? Would the Catholics take pity upon the needy or suffering of other denominations? In her growing distrust she leapt to reckless surmises. What if these black-robed women were not "sisters" after all, but merely bold imposters, who assumed the dress of the order for the time for their own selfish aims and purposes?

She recalled herself from her reverie with a little shudder, and her voice was hard and cold as she spoke.

"Sister Veronica, I really do not feel justified in helping your hospitals and asylums any more. I think it is time we were looking up the poor about us. There may be fellow-beings suffering in our midst without a murmur, people whose pride forbids them to appeal to public charity. I think we should be doing more nobly if we devoted our time to looking up such cases, instead of contributing to the support of distant institutions, of which we know nothing."

"Oh, madam, if others were only of your thinking!" interrupted the visitor impetuously.

"What then? I fear you would not succeed so well in your missions"

Mrs. Belden leant forward as she spoke, and gazed curiously upward into the countenance beneath the peaked white bonnet. The momentary flutter, and the crimson wave which had transformed her caller's face, passed away, leaving it cold and still in its purity.

"One must rejoice at any lessening of the great sum of human misery," was the quiet response.

The anchorite turned to go. She had not only failed in her errand, but had met with a decided rebuff; yet at the door she paused a moment, and held out a shapely white hand, which met the other's in a sympathetic grasp.

The doctor's wife stood at the window, with mingled curiosity and interest, and watched her visitor depart. To her surprise the latter did not continue up the street, but retraced her steps along the lonely path leading in the direction of the railway station.

The picture of the strange woman lingered obstinately in Mrs. Belden's memory. There was something oddly familiar about her face. The very dimples in her cheeks—that a sister of charity should have dimples—the gentle curves of chin and mouth, and the bright flash of her eyes, unsubdued by the long and weary penance to which her pale face and wasted figure bore testimony, were all parts of a haunting and elusive memory. She wondered to what order the woman belonged. The skirt of her robe was certainly very scant and shabby, and a faint line about the bottom reminded her of the mark left on her own black silk where she had lately ripped off a plaiting. A little starch and skilful manipulation might easily convert a pillow-case stiffly starched into one of

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those large, square bonnets. But after a short time Mrs. Belden dismissed these wandering speculations from her mind, and, resuming her patchwork, was soon deeply absorbed in studying the arrangement of some "samples."

* * * * *

Several months sped by, and the good lady, in spite of her creditable resolutions, had taken no active step towards ascertaining the circumstances of her neighbours. One day had been too chilly, another too windy, a third too warm, to sally forth on her charitable errand. So she had contented herself with making a few inquiries of chance visitors. She had been laughed at for her pains. It was an axiom in the town that no worthy and industrious person could ever suffer for lack of food or raiment.

There came a day when the doctor was late to his six o'clock supper. The table was spread in the cosy dining-room and the tea simmered on the hearth. The young housewife vibrated between table and window. The little cathedral clock on the parlour mantel sounded the half-hour. The young wife busied herself picking off the dead leaves from a twining similax which stood in the window—so many withered leaves do the house-plants show in that exasperating climate.

The clock solemnly struck the hour of seven. The little woman had grown too accustomed to the exactions of a physician's life to feel more than impatient. She sat down to the table alone and tried to eat, but only succeeded in swallowing a cup of tea and a bit of fruit. Then she resumed her post at the window. A light rain was falling, which increased until it came in gusts and squalls, then settled into a steady downpour.

It was after nine o'clock when she descried a dark figure hurrying up the street. The gate opened and shut with a click, and the doctor bounded up the steps, to be met with a tearful greeting on the part of his wife.

"Oh, Robert, you don't know what I have suffered! I was so afraid that some of those dreadful men who are always——"

"Nonsense, child!" But his voice was shaky, and as he reached out his hand and laid a long morocco case on the table, she noticed that his face was pale and drawn.

"An operation, dear? What was it?"

He did not answer at once. Indeed, he sat down to the table and drank his cup of tea and ate a slice or two of bread-and-butter, chatting, meanwhile, in an absent way on indifferent topics. It was only when they had gone into the little parlour, and he had thrown himself into a great easy-chair before the glowing fire, that he recognised her question.

"A seven-year old boy, dear. Leg crushed. Stood it like a hero!"

"How did it happen—the injury, I mean?"

"Slipped and fell under a backing engine. They seem to have been pretty badly off—the mother and child—and the stoker of engine No. 26 had been in the habit of throwing off lumps of coal for the little fellow to pick up. To-day the lad tried to climb up before they had slowed down, and missed his footing and fell."

"How he must have suffered!"

"He never seemed to think of himself at all. Was possessed with a fear that the stoker might be blamed. Beautiful little fellow, in spite of his shabby clothes. Broad white forehead, curling brown hair, and thoughtful grey eyes. Do you know I can't get rid of a certain fancy that I've seen the child before."

"Probably in the streets," suggested Mrs. Belden.

"No, no. Years ago; when I was a boy, or in some other existence."

"Oh, madam, if others were only of your thinking!"

"Where do they live?"

"I declare, Bessie, I never suspected there was such destitution in this place. We had to perform the operation by the light of a coal-oil lamp. She held it."

"The mother?"

"Yes; and never flinched. Shielded it with her hand to keep the rain from putting out the light. In all my professional experience I never saw such self-command."

"Indifference I should call it," suggested the indignant listener.

"I don't know, my dear," he replied; "I don't know. When we got through I wondered that she did not move or stir. I looked at her, and her eyes were fixed upon the face of the unconscious child. I had to unclasp her hands from the lamp. Her fingers were cold and clammy; she was like a person in a cataleptic trance. I thought she was going to fall to the ground. But, instead——"

"Instead—what?"

"Instead, she insisted upon staying there alone to-night. Would not listen to our offer of watchers. Seemed in a hurry to get us off."

"But how can a child recover in such a place? It is criminal to leave him there."

"The townspeople may be a trifle uncivilised, my dear, but they are not wanting in the common attributes of humanity. The men have been busy this evening. They have rented that little house Brown's family vacated last week, and eighty pounds will be placed in bank to-morrow to the little boy's credit."

But the townspeople found that they had a difficult case with which to deal. Face to face with the exigencies of her situation, the mother consented to move to the house made ready for her, but she drew sparingly upon the funds placed to her credit, and took a careful inventory of everything the house contained, with a view to paying for everything as soon as she should be able.

In an inconceivably short time, thanks to the reactive

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powers of healthy childhood, and the purer air the child was able to be about the house, blithe as a little maimed bird, on his single leg and crutch. The scant sewing that the mother could procure was ill-paid and inadequate for her needs, and she quietly opened another industry. She made the fact known that she was ready to wash soiled linen.

The doctor and his wife sometimes discussed the anomalous character of the woman with whom Fate had brought them in contact.

"I can't quite make her out," the doctor once remarked; "to look at her one would think her incapable of feeling—that she had scarcely a human instinct. She is developing into the hardest business woman I ever saw. Yet I am inclined to think that the night I first saw her she was stimulated by courage of the highest order, an heroic self-forgetfulness that conquered her own physical weakness."

"I understand her perfectly," returned his wife, with prompt feminine decision; "she is constructed on a different principle from ordinary women. Some gentle instinct of sympathy — of womanly tenderness—is wanting in her composition. I have seen her day after day, you know, my dear, and I ought to be able to judge. Though she is not a bad sort of woman at all," she generously conceded.

"Curious sort of name, isn't it?—Mrs. Ruthstan. It has a very fancy sound."

"It doesn't sound like a real name at all," returned Mrs. Belden severely. "Oh, she has a history behind her, and we shall know it some day, depend upon it."

Caught the fainting woman in his arms.

It so happened that the very next day the doctor stumbled across an old friend, newly arrived in the place, and brought him home. "Bessie, you remember Jack Grosvenor—the oldest friend I have. You remember he would have been the best man at our wedding ——"

"If he hadn't been busy getting married himself a thousand miles away. Yes, I remember, I am very glad to welcome you to our home, Mr. Grosvenor," said the doctor's wife, holding out her hand with a winning smile.

But there was no answering smile on the face of the man she so cordially greeted. She remembered her husband's description of the gay, light-hearted fellow, and tried to identify him with this sober-faced, reserved man, who had silently seated himself by the window.

"Jack has just come back with a party from South Africa," exclaimed the doctor; "he is a rich man now."

"That is very good," said Mrs. Belden absently, wondering why her husband should have made such a point of his friend's business success, or speak of it as if it were of vital interest to her.

"I am glad for Jack," proceeded the doctor, a little awkwardly; "he has been telling me something of his experiences to-day—you don't mind my telling Bessie, Jack, I'm sure, do you?—and he's had a terribly hard pull. Worst of all, he lost his wife."

"I am very sorry——"

"No, not that way!" hastily interrupted the doctor; "lost sight of her. He left her in London three years ago. Heard from her once or twice, but his roaming life was not favourable to correspondence. Now he tells me he has lost all trace of her."

"How very strange!" Her woman's curiosity was roused. "And she was such a pretty woman, Mr. Grosvenor. I remember the lovely face of the photograph you sent us, when you were married. Such a dimpled, laughing face! Where was it I saw one that reminded me of it, not long ago?"

"I can't say it seems so very strange to me," remarked Grosvenor, taking part in the conversation for the first time, and speaking in a laboured, husky voice; "I wonder that she put up with it so long. We had had a hard time of it for years. You know how she had been reared up. She was a Miss Ruth Stanhope. I was never able to provide for her in the way she had been accustomed to at home. I left her with almost nothing. She was a proud, spirited woman. She tired of the struggle and went back to her friends. I had hoped she might hold on account of the boy."

"The boy? Then you had a child?"

Grosvenor assented with a mute gesture.

"Ruth Stanhope," repeated the doctor's wife slowly, looking steadily at her husband, who sent her back a significant glance; "and the boy—how old would your little son be now, Mr. Grosvenor?"

"A little more than seven years."

"Robert, I have an errand that must be attended to at once. You and Mr. Grosvenor will excuse me. I will not be long."

Mrs. Belden had snatched up a broad-brimmed hat

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and was tying it under her chin as she spoke, her eyes kindled with excitement, her cheeks lit with a sudden flame. Jack Grosvenor, aroused from his apathy, looked curiously after her as she sped down the street, her head in a whirl. As she flew along the pavement she tried to balance and arrange the queer facts and strange memories that were flitting through her brain. She remembered something of the splendour of Jack Grosvenor's wedding, and the contrast it had presented to their own modest nuptials.

She recalled an account she had read of the marriage banquet and the list of the notable guests who were in attendance. She saw in anticipation the bare room she was about to enter, with its beggarly strip of rag carpeting along the centre, the bedstead with its worn coverlet, the wooden chairs, and the woman bent over the ironing board, contrasting it with the abounding comforts and generous hospitality of that earlier home.

A high wind was blowing, and clouds of dust darkened the air about her. Battling with the force of the storm, she yet found time to marvel at the strength of character that had enabled the petted girl, born and cradled in the lap of luxury, deliberately to renounce the life of ease open to her, and condemn herself and her child to the life of toil and hardship that had resulted so disastrously. The gentle woman's heart filled with love and sympathy, and she was ready to take Jack Grosvenor's wife into her arms and cry over her sorrows and humiliations.

Her heart was chilled at the sight of the cold, proud face, whose severity was increased by the piece of stiff, white muslin bound about the head as a protection from the smoke and coal-dust of the ironing-stove. Mrs. Belden looked in momentary abhorrence at the mass of lace and embroidery lying upon the ironing-board, guessing only too well the owners of that tawdry splendour.

"What! do you work for them?"

For a moment the woman calmly gazed upon her questioner, then turned with an expressive glance to the low pallet where her boy lay sleeping, by his side the crutch that must be his life-long companion.

Notwithstanding the mother's impassive demeanour, the eyes of the visitor filled with sudden tears. She twirled her hat-strings and searched the cold face, wondering how she had best communicate the tidings of which she was the bearer. She observed the dignified movement of the tall figure across the room, the shapely hand that changed the cool iron for a fresh one, and she remembered how the same hand had held a light without flinching, while the little boy's limb was being taken off. With what a disdainful front she had faced poverty, and how sternly she had repelled those who offered sympathy and help. Such a woman would never have nerve for anything. Why should she plan to spare her what would at most be little more than a slight surprise.

Mrs. Belden ended by flinging all her scruples to the wind.

"My husband's old friend, Jack Grosvenor, is at our house."

"Alive?"

The word spoke volumes. The pain and agony of years were concentrated in the cry. The hot iron she was holding dropped upon the lace draperies and burnt its way through them, as she clutched at the table to steady herself, while her brown eyes sought her visitor's with a look of piteous intreaty.

"Is—it—true?" she pleaded.

There was no need of answer. A man's step sounded outside, and the door was flung open, and Jack Grosvenor, returned to something like his old, impetuous self, strode across the room and caught the fainting woman in his arms. The white turban fell back from the pale face, its rigid features relaxed into a happy smile, and the doctor's wife, struck by the transformation was startled with a sudden recognition and murmured softly:

"Sister Veronica!"

Flora Haines Loughead.

STILL ON SALE . . . . . No. 4 OF Pearson's Magazine.

THE CONTENTS INCLUDE:

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No. 1.—Liverpool Illustrated.

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Soldier an' Sailor too. *Rudyard Kipling.*
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With other stories and articles by Ian Maclaren, H. J. W. Dam, W. L. Alden, Nellie K. Blissett, J. F. Sullivan, Winifred Graham, etc., etc.

While work by the following artists appear in addition to those mentioned above: G. G. Manton, George Ashton, R. Sauber, R.B.A., H. Piffard, Charles May, A. Kemp Tebby, A. Ludovici, etc., etc

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Charmed by a Waltz.

HE was the most interesting murderer I ever met. Before the crime he was a private in my company and section, and even the captain thought him an excellent soldier. During his confinement in the guard-room, which lasted over a month, his actions were those of acute mania, so that the sergeant of the guard did not enter his cell.

He was as restless as a hyena, and paced his cell with a monotony of movement almost hypnotic to one watching him through the bars of his cage. When I was sergeant of the guard I would lie on the hard guard bed and look through the small, iron-latticed window in the centre of the door that opened into the prisoner's room, and see him in his cell, where the view of his legs and feet was cut off, by the lintel of the window. Dimly through the iron meshes I would watch the slow, regular movements of his body as it passed from end to end of his cage, like a human pendulum, beating in death strokes the time which elapsed until it must swing into eternity. In spite of the horrors which it suggested, this vision fascinated my attention, and if watched for long seldom failed to produce sleep, for the prisoner kept constantly crooning the insistent measures of a popular waltz.

All through the sultry night the sentry on number one could hear the sharp click of his steps on the concrete floor of his cell, beating regular accompaniments to the accented notes of this recurrent strain. Before trial, Davis, our surgeon, was ordered to examine the prisoner's sanity, and I went with him. He was still pacing his cell and slowly humming "The Blue Danube."

It was during this very waltz, played by the orchestra the night of the regimental dance, that he had brutally butchered Corporal Jenkins with a long-bladed knife, so it struck me as appropriate that this same air should now be a monomania in his madness and control his brain. As he paced his cell he was beating time to the swing of the waltz with a pencil by way of *bâton*. Davis asked the officer of the guard to have the prisoner brought into the general prison room, but the latter replied that the man was raving mad, and that it was folly to think of letting him from his cell or of sending men to enter it.

Davis then asked for the key, quietly unlocked the cage and opened it. As he did so the prisoner wheeled in his promenade and sprang towards him. Davis stepped quickly aside and struck him a half blow behind the ear, which felled him. Then we carried him into the general prison room, where Davis made an examination, during which the prisoner struggled for freedom with a nervous, weakening strength, as, assisted by a file of the guard, I held him pinioned to the floor. "The man seems insane," said Davis, speaking quietly to the officer of the guard. "Does anyone know the exact hour and minute at which the stabbing of Corporal Jenkins occurred?"

"It was exactly ten o clock," replied the officer of the guard. "Sergeant Morrow stated in examination before the colonel that 'last post' was sounding just as he entered the dance room, and at that moment the stabbing occurred."

"Were they playing 'The Blue Danube' at the time?" Davis asked. I replied that Sergeant Morrow had told me they were. I had mentioned to Morrow that Henderson raved constantly in this tune. "Ah, then!" said Davis, speaking in a low tone to the officer of the guard, "then I understand his case. This is a very peculiar form of monomania. The waltz, the dominant sound during the act of murder, will rule his waking hours day and night, for it was then the madness struck in and phonographed it on the brain. In this form of insanity the brain acts like the sensitive plate of a phonograph to receive the ruling sound of the moment and will repeat it incessantly until the brain wears itself out. If the madness be complete there will be but one break; that will occur exactly at ten o'clock, when the prisoner will cease humming the waltz, and re-enact the tragedy. After a few moments the impression of the murder will pass away, when he will again resume the waltz."

I was impressed by the clear statement Davis made

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on what seemed to me a most difficult case. Lieutenant ——, the orderly officer, was also struck by it, for he asked if he should send the prisoner into the hospital. "No," replied Davis, "keep him confined in his cell, and, without being observed, watch him closely about ten o'clock for the completing symptoms. You can report to me in the morning." Then he replaced Henderson in his cell, who at once took up his musical promenade.

I was detailed that night to watch him, and did so from my bunk in the guardroom. I had cautioned the bugler of the guard to warn me quietly when he left the guardroom to sound "last post." All through the evening I witnessed the same monotonous movement and listened to the same monotonous waltz, chanted slowly as always before. At intervals I would rouse myself and step outside the guardroom and stand in the cool sallyport to assure myself that I was awake and my vision unimpaired, so drowsy would I become under the effort of strained attention. I must finally have fallen asleep, for the bugler touched me on the shoulder and startled me. I did not see him enter, but could have sworn I was still viewing Henderson's movements in the cage.

I placed my face against the latticed window, looking into his cage, which he was still mechanically pacing. Then, as the first note of "last post" sounded, he stopped and reared as quickly as a stag is startled when he first hears a hostile shot that has struck wide and knows not whence it came. The waltz ceased, and in a moment I had all but seen the stabbing of Jenkins—then, as always before, the waltz again.

In the morning I reported. It was clearly a case of acute madness, or no one who ever performed a tour of guard duty with Henderson had ever seen madness. but, to our astonishment and horror, the surgeon thought otherwise, and so officially reported.

The colonel was furious. He had inspected the man—the man was mad! He called up Davis and informed him of the facts. Davis replied firmly: "The man is sane, colonel, and I so reported."

"He's not sane!" the colonel retorted. "Why influence me to stir up a civil murder trial, which plays the dickins with discipline. He should be sent to an asylum!"

Ten years ago Davis would have explained patiently and at length why he thought Henderson sane, but since these callow days he had once offered gratuitous information to a superior in command, so he said simply: "I'm not influencing you to do anything, colonel, unless it is permitting you to do your duty by doing mine."

Davis spoke with the gentle firmness of one struggling to be respectful. The word "permitting" had been delicately chosen, and passed below the colonel's guard.

"That will do, doctor," said the colonel stiffly, his colour rising, as Davis left the office. Even after long Indian service has killed your respect for a man, his opinions are still entitled to it, for they are usually the result of experiences that have cost the man dearly. Yet my faith in Davis weakened. It takes more than five years' confidence in a human being to outweigh our own fallible deductions even on subjects of which we are variously ignorant. The egotism of being rational is so pleasingly pleasant. Still, the colonel sent Henderson to civil trial, and bullied Davis in the hope that he would stop it.

The trial was held, and many attended it. Before it proceeded to the arrangement, the court summoned Davis for opinion. Again the same reports he had made so confidently to the colonel. Everyone was dissatisfied, and the court proceeded to trial. The colonel again called Davis up. "Davis," said he bluntly, "this has gone far enough. I was a witness in that man's trial to-day, and the man is mad, and the court and everyone knows it except you, who of all persons should know it. I don't want a man of my regiment to be hanged unless I'm convinced that he deserves it. Now, stop your professional stubbornness, and request some one in consultation before the verdict. Would you have a crazy man hanged?"

"The man's as sane as you are, colonel, and even grant he is not—which I don't—the class of insanity which he affects, if real, would be subsequent to the act, so he would be punishable whenever reason or a lucid interval appeared. It would be only a little too kind to hang him now, that is all," replied the surgeon. So the trial concluded and Henderson was sentenced to be hanged. On petition of the colonel, a stay of execution was granted until medical experts could be summoned from Calcutta.

These, after consultation with Davis, pronounced the prisoner sane.

During the week before the day set for his execution, Henderson confessed his feigned insanity to me while I was taking him some tobacco, and said that he felt kindly towards everyone for his treatment in trial except the surgeon, who had played it on him that he might hang. "If I only had my liberty long enough to kill Davis," he said to me one day, "I'd die happy." He said to me that I had been good to him; I had fetched him some clean clothes and tobacco, and that he would reward me. Then he outlined how he had killed a rich Hindoo near Delhi, three years before, that he had robbed him of gold which he had buried, and that he had intended to return for the treasure and had never done so. Then he gave minute directions as to place and exact locality and amount of the buried gold.

"Henderson," I asked, when he had finished, "are you still crazy, or are you only lying?"

"Neither," he said simply. "As I mount the scaffold I'll incline my head towards you, which is to affirm, in the presence of eternity, that I speak the truth."

The day before his execution he told me he had forgiven everyone, even Davis, who had only done his duty, and to tell him that now he invited him to come and see him hanged.

After my discharge I actually went up to Delhi and followed the rascal's directions, but found no buried money, though the old Hindoo had been murdered, as stated. Shortly afterwards I met Mr. Davis, and told him of my chase. He laughed pleasantly, and then I asked him:

"Doctor, would you mind telling me how you could be so certain that Henderson was not really insane?"

"Why, you should know that," he said, with a slight twinkle. "You helped me to establish the fact. Do you recall that I gave you a diagnosis of his case before his cell, and had you placed on guard to observe the completing symptoms?"

"Yes, but he really showed them."

"So would you, had you been feigning insanity, as he was doing, and overheard me, and believed, as until now you evidently did believe, that I spoke the truth."

I now understood Henderson's extreme bitterness towards Davis, who had duped him into self-conviction.

Harry Rogers.

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THE WINNING OF GUNHILD

By George C. Wallis, *Author of "Behind the Barrier," etc., etc.*

CHAPTER I.

The Bringing Home of Olaf.

The little group of women at the landing place were very busy with their tongues as they watched the black ship coming slowly up the fjord, the shining shields hung on her sides, and the broad-bladed oars dipping regularly in the water as she came through the purple shadow of the great cliffs and then out again into the full blaze of the summer sun. The *Swallow* was not expected back at North-hold so soon from her voyage of vengeance, "and surely," said Editha, "they return with victory, or they would not be here at all."

Yet there was a note of fear in the Norse-woman's voice as she said this, for no flag fluttered from the mast, as was the custom when the Vikings came home in triumph, and as the ship drew nearer it was plainly seen that the rows of shields had great gaps in them and that the men on board seemed few and the oarsmen put no heart in their work. A murmur went through the waiting group, and Gunhild, who stood by her mother's side, gave a little cry of alarm.

"I see but one of my brothers standing in the prow, mother," she said trembling. "Think you that evil man, Valstran, has slain one of them?"

"Hush, child!" said Editha, "or your father will chide you for a weakling! 'Tis Sigismund you see, and he will tell us where Olaf is, if he has not brought him home. Keep a brave heart, Gunhild,"—as the golden-haired girl clung in fear to her arm—"befitting the daughter of Bjorne and Editha; and not like the women of the south!"

"But even Harald wept when he found his father Asli slain, and Valstran gone," said Gunhild.

"Ay, child, and so would any in whom the kindness of Baldar was instilled from the first," said Freyda, stepping forward and taking the girl's soft hand in her own. "Ay, and so would you, Editha, if aught had happened to your Olaf then!"

"If aught had!" cried the resolute woman going towards the steps to meet the returning warriors, "but I think the gods will guard him well; it was so foretold."

The Vikings were at the landing now, but instead of leaping ashore as he was used to do, Sigismund hung back gloomily while the men took something gently from the deck and carried it slowly up the steps and through the silently-parting crowd

Reverently lifted the sail-cloth from the something on which all eyes were turned.

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to the feet of Editha, there laying it tenderly down, without speaking a word.

Then Sigismund followed from the ship—which all saw to be so badly battered and splintered as to be scarcely seaworthy—and motioned to Harald Aslison and his man Eric, and they bent and reverently lifted the sail-cloth from the something on which all eyes were turned.

For a moment Editha stood as if carved in stone. Bjorne's face grew white and drawn. Gunhild gave a cry of terror, and Sigismund drew near and looked on with haggard eyes. Then the woman broke out angrily to the dead son's brother:

"This is your care of him! This is the guarding strength of your ready arm. This—nithing, craven, sleepy one! This is what you dare to bring me home when I want my Olaf as he was when he went away—beautiful as Baldar and strong as Thor. This is how you dare to bring him back to me—coward, outcast one, no longer a son of mine!"

"Have patience, wife," said old Bjorne, striding forward to gaze nearer upon the calm features of his youngest son as he lay there so still, with his sword upon his breast, his shield upon it, and the war-axe at his side. "Have patience, wife, till Sigismund has spoken. This is an evil day for us, but I would fain know whether he died in fair fight, with his face to the foe, so that he went straight to Valhalla."

"Yes, weak one, tell us how it is you bring him home to us thus!" cried Editha wildly, stroking the face of the dead with quivering hand. "Tell us! tell us!"

For all answer Sigismund shook back his cloak from his left shoulder, and they saw that where his left arm should have been was only a bandaged stump, scarcely reaching to the elbow. And then, seeing their horror-stricken gaze, he said, slowly:

"This was done by the last stroke but one of the battle-axe of Valstran. The last laid Olaf low."

With a stifled cry Editha sprang forward and seized him in her arms, and wept over him as if her heart would break. Sigismund took her by the arm and led her away and into the house. And some of the thralls picked up the rude bier and carried the dead after them, and Freyda and Gunhild followed, weeping together.

Then Bjorne turned to the sailors, saying, without a quiver in his voice, though his lips were pale and his eyes wet with tears that he fought back as only an old Viking could:

"How came you to be beaten by the Danes, Algar, and yet escape from their clutches?"

Harald and the others crowded round as the battle-scarred seaman made reply:

"It is very simple, Earl Bjorne. We took the *Swallow* straight to Denmark and up the creek to Valstran's lair, for your sons were eager to avenge their uncle's death before Harald should return to North-hold and come to their aid; and, having news of our coming, the Dane met us with two long ships filled with men, and attacked us in the narrows of the creek. We fought stubbornly, I can tell you, Earl, and none of us so well as Sigismund, who saved his brother a full score times before Valstran slew him with the swinging axe. As they numbered three men to each one of us and boarded us from both sides at once, Sigismund gave word, when Olaf fell, to be going home, and we cut the grappling chains and got away, and being the swiftest vessel of the three, left Valstran raging on the high seas. That is all, Earl Bjorne."

There was a moment's silence, and then old Bjorne raised his right hand to the heavens and swore by Odin that if Valstran lived to see next Yuletide, he would go to meet him despite his age and stiffness of limb.

"Ay, though he slay me with the same axe with which he has slain my son Olaf and my brother Asli, I will try my steel on him!" he cried.

"He shall not be alive next Yuletide, father," said Sigismund, who had come out of the house with Harald's mother, Freyda, "for even one-armed as I am, I will yet have revenge on him. Thanks be to the gods that it is my right arm that is whole and sound."

"And I, too, will go!" cried Harald—"I, who would have gone before but that you two were too quick for me, and my father's old ship was burnt. Men call me Long-

Old Bjorne raised his hand to the heavens.

sword in derision, because I carry the blade that old Thrunna the armourer made just before he died, and will have no other. They laugh at me because I have as yet done no deed of valour that entitles me to wear the golden wings, but I tell you all that I shall do a deed yet that will make you old warriors burn with envy, and make my long sword a name in the land!"

"If you also will rashly throw away your life and leave me alone with little Thelma," said Freyda sadly, "woe is me. But as it is my own unfortunate face that has wrought this mischief—for Valstran was an old love of mine, and for that slew Asli—it is, perhaps, decreed that on me must fall the greatest burden. Go, Harald, and may the Hammer-Thrower guard thee!"

And the pale-faced woman, still beautiful despite her years, bent and kissed Harald on the forehead, and then left them.

Long after supper that night the men sat and talked

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over their plans of retaliation, and many were the foaming horns of good, strong, home-brewed ale that they emptied ere they were satisfied to seek their couches and a needed sleep. And this is what they decided.

As the *Swallow* was not fit to take out without repair, they would launch the new ship that had just been built at North-hold—the *Walrus*—and loading her with as many men as she could carry, set out the next day, and so come upon Valstran before he expected them. A good crew would more easily be got together now, because Harald and his men had returned from the inland, and his mother and all her household had come to live with Earl Bjorne at his great hall. There would be no lack of men, therefore, both to guard the house and to fill the *Walrus* with a staunch crew.

CHAPTER II.

The Were-Woman's Words.

Now Harald was in love with his cousin Gunhild—as, truth to tell, fair Gunhild was in love with him—and so, in the early dawn, before the war-worn men were astir, the son of Asli rose and went out across the fields to where the fjord broadened out into a gravel-shored lake of still, deep water, unfathomable as the dark blue eyes of his sister Thelma. It may have been that Harald went thither because he knew it to be a favourite walk of Gunhild's from when they played together as children, or it may not—these things are hard to say—but however it was, he had not long to wait before Gunhild also came tripping lightly down the home-path, her white arms locked upon the snowy coif that bound her glorious golden hair, and her blue eyes glancing merriment that not even last night's sorrow could dispel.

Their gaze fell on Harald and Gunhild.

And Harald, seeing her coming down the pasture edge, the colour of her cheeks out-matching the thousand pink and white flowers that she passed on her way, and the sweetness and charm of her lithe, supple figure blotting out for him the beauty of the dissolving mist in the hollows and the dew-hung gossamer tracery on the bushes by the water-side, thought that surely there was never so fair a maiden before in all Norseland!

And when she came blushing up to him, Harald sprang forward and clasped her in his great, strong arms and kissed her on the lips before she could resist—which, when she did, was very gently done.

"You are not angry with me, dear one?" questioned Harald, as the girl slipped out of his embrace, "not angry with one who has loved you ever since he can remember?"

"If I would be, I cannot, Harald!" said Gunhild, putting her hand in his again and a soft light gleaming from her blue eyes, "'twas only a maiden's bashfulness that made me draw back, and surely you know how to deal with that—if you have not yet won name and fame for my sake!"

Then Harald knew that she was his from that day henceforth, and a great joy seized him, and as sweet-lipped Gunhild nestled to him and he kissed and kissed again that lovely face which shone with pleasure pure as the light of the northern sky, he took vow by all the gods of Asgard that never would he rest till he had won fortune and renown and could claim her for his wife without fear of refusal from her father. And Gunhild was very happy in his love, and strengthened his resolve.

"I pray that the Nornas* have so decreed it," said she, "that you are the chosen to avenge Asli and Olaf, and in so doing to win the wings and then me; but," she went on, after he had kissed those pretty lips again, "I have some fear of my father's love of riches and the favours of some of his distant friends. You know that wealthy Turgrimm sent messengers some weeks ago to say that he would repeat his visit, and he is a man of great influence at the Folk-Thing, and will help the Earl with his land troubles if some boon be granted him in return."

"And it will be you whom he will want," cried Harald, his brow darkening like the brow of Thor the Thunderer when the storm-clouds gather; "and still I am fameless, and know of no quarrel I can pick with him. I am but a poor man."

"Yet have patience and hope, dear heart," said Gunhild gently, her slight fingers playing with the drooping yellow curls upon his upper lip; "you will make a beginning to-day to gain these things you lack, and while you are gone I will pray unceasingly to Wunsch to grant your desires—for it would be a hard lot for me, Harald, if I had to be the bride of another, though I dare not tell the Earl, my father, as much."

Then the two young lovers, happy while the sun shone on their early lives, sat down awhile on a large stone at the foot of the rising ground, and talked of much that would be very interesting to hear, but most profitless to write, and then parted and went home by different ways.

Now, so engrossed were Gunhild and Harald with their own company whilst they were talking together, that neither of them noticed a fierce-faced woman, with matted hair, crouching just behind the bushes, nor heard the slight movement of her feet on the ground when she bent nearer to catch the import of their conversation. And had either of them known that she was there, their hearts would not have pulsed so lightly that morning, for every thrall and freeman in the garth and homestead of North-hold knew the evil repute, and stood in awe of the ill-will and dire spells of Svenda, the witch, the Were-woman, who was so clever at reading obscure runes, and foretelling death and disaster and plague. And very few there were, excepting the evil-minded—who bought her questionable aid in times of need by various presents—who cared to pass her cave in the hill above the Rainbow Falls at night or alone.

She was early up and about that morning, having doubtless seen some of the commotion of yestereve, and it would have sent a thrill of horror through anyone to have seen the ghoul-like glitter of her fiery, deep-set eyes when their gaze fell on Harald and Gunhild sitting in converse on the mossy stone.

She drew near to them like a cat stealing on her prey, remaining quite still until they rose to depart, making no sound even when she stretched forward to hear more distinctly, and in so doing espied a young stint running out of a hemlock shrub towards the lake margin for his morning meal of water-flies. Fearing that they might glance that way and see her if he ran across where she crouched, Svenda rose up a moment and breathed an incantation silently with her lips, and cast her hands vindictively towards him, so that the merry little creature stopped in his career and shivered from snout to tail, and rolled over and, with a feeble gasp, expired. Svenda shrank back to her crouching position, waiting till the two parted, then rose and ambled clumsily but swiftly after Gunhild, overtaking the light-hearted girl at the stone across the brook.

"You seem merry of mien this morning, proud one," said the Were-woman, laying her scraggy hand on Gunhild's shoulder, "very merry, considering that death is in your house! For I know, you see, my ruddy-haired one,

* The *Nornas* were the *Three Fates*—past, present, future—of the Norse mythology.

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though the news was spoken to me by no human lips, and all shun me as the people of the southlands shun keen-biting Thrymm.* Ha! ha!" and she laughed horribly.

Gunhild quailed a moment, then tossed her head haughtily and would have gone on, but the Were-woman continued:

"Be not in haste to leave me, pretty one—you have stayed long with your lover—and I can soon tell you that which I came to say. You sent me from your door—you and your stern mother—when I came begging to you; sent me away with scorn and anger when I offered to read the future for you; and for that I hate all you Bjornes, and you, milk-faced one, all the more because love smiles on your path. Silly wench! I tell you that a sea of blood and tears is awaiting you and your fameless lover, and hardly shall he win you at the end."

"Let me pass, wretched woman!" cried Gunhild, pushing aside the bony hand that was outstretched to clutch and detain her, "let me pass, for I trust Odin more than to believe your evil tale."

"Ay! go, girl," said the Were-woman, with a mocking gesture, "go your way and meet your troubles as you will! Death and sorrow and blood—red, streaming blood—are foredoomed to fall upon you and your love and your house, and the smell of the crimson gore is already in the air and on the fields and the crops! And in the day of your desolation remember the Were-woman of the cave and know that she is laughing at you—laughing!—as she laughed when your Olaf came in dead! Ay, go, and let that be your comfort!"

But Gunhild had leaped the brook, and with fingers to her ears had sped away out of reach of the cursing hag into the home-garden, and so, with an evil smile and a strange arm-crossing motion, the Were-woman turned and was gone.

CHAPTER III.

The Treachery of Turgrimm.

The *Walrus* was let down her sliding planks and out upon rollers into the fjord, her virgin timbers raising a curving cloud of spray about her figure-head as her prow clove the still waters. A faint cheer went up from the little crowd gathered to watch her depart.

Harald and Sigismund stood high in the stern as the rowers pulled the long ship out into the mid-channel, and as far as they could be seen from the landing-place remained there, waving their swords in the sunlight in parting token to the women-folk they left behind, neither of the cousins speaking until the great cliffs were rounded and the only living thing in view was an osprey circling slowly in the clear air.

Then Harald said, with hand on his cousin's arm:

"We have seen the last of North-hold, Sigismund, and of all those near and dear to us, unless we slay the Dane."

And Sigismund answered that that was his thought, too, and then, too full for much speech, strode forward and sat silent on a coil of rope, with his back to the bulwark.

So they sailed on down that wild, rugged coast of jutting rocks and deep inlets, and after many days came to the mouth of the Sound. Late one afternoon the keen eyes of Eric discovered two ships scudding along southward before the rising gale.

It did not take long for the Vikings to be alert and at their posts, and for full sail to be put on despite the risk of a coming storm. As the *Walrus* leapt through the water after the flying ships like a living creature after her prey, Sigismund, standing up in the prow in the full brunt of the sea-spume cloud that rose from the sharp-cutting keel, recognised the ships as the ships of Valstran and cried out to the rowers to out their blades and bend to their work like men.

"The wolf has not yet returned to his lair!" he said to Harald, as the two tested their weapons afresh and the latter lovingly polished that long sword of his that was as yet new to its work, "he will therefore be short of some of his men. We must catch him out here in the open sea if the Aegar will let us."

"Let the Aegar come and bring what storm he will," replied Harald, "we shall get up with yonder vessels, for I see they are not over swift. Pull, you hardy warriors, pull! Put your muscles into it, and with our steel and the tempest's fury we will leave the ships of yonder Dane a couple of wrecks before the night be gone."

But little need was there to urge on those lusty Vikings! They burnt for revenge as much as their two leaders, and very soon the *Walrus* drew close up under the stern of the rearmost Dane, the bellying sails and the long, powerful

The Walrus.

sweeps of the big oars sending the great ship churning through the water at matchless speed, the salt sleet dashing halfway across her deck before its wet advance was checked by the breath of the storm that howled behind.

Now Valstran was a wily sailor, and seeing that he could not get away from the enemy, waited with hand on the steering-oar and eye on the main-sail of his own ship till the *Walrus* came foaming on like some great avenging monster through the tempest-tossed and white-crested sea, and just as the long, gleaming tusk of the walrus head grazed his stern, gave word to furl sails and draw in blades, and the other vessel following suit, the two parted slightly and suddenly slowed down, while the Norse ship came ploughing on between them unable to stop, and the two keels mowed down the banks of oars and threw the rowers into confusion. And ere Harald could get his men into order, the grappling chains were cast and secured, some one sent a long axe tearing through the sail, splitting it cornerwise, and from both sides the boarders leapt upon them and began the fight.

It was a wild encounter, that of the avenging Norsemen and the desperate Danes, plying their heavy axes and keen swords on each other there in the mid ship of the three, that bound together, rose and fell with the up and down heave of the raging sea, the sound of the strife now rising harsh and strong above the whistle of the wind in the cordage and anon being drowned in the angry roar of the storm and the lash of the driven rain.

But the men of North-hold soon recovered from their momentary panic, and being at least as many in number as the others, drove them back a space, making better foothold for themselves, and for a time held their own against the plundering sea-rovers of Valstran.

Then the Dane, full of evil resource, bade some of his men cut down the mast of his smallest ship so that it would fall crosswise on the deck of the *Walrus*, and though skilful Eric saw the foul trick and laid low three of the men with

* *Thrymm*, God of Frost.

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his arrows, down came the broken, splintering pole full across the deck, bringing with it what little sail was left up and falling with a sounding crash into the midst of the struggling Norsemen.

Algar, and Hrolf the Ready-Witted, and Edred the Silent, and three more, all good men of North-hold and trusty servants of Bjorne, were stricken down under the hammer-like blow of that mast, and Valstran and his Danes, seizing their chance, leapt over the barrier it formed and plunged into the backward-surging crowd of their foes with shouts of victory.

Harald and Sigismund were forced off their feet by the rush and carried helpless before it to the stern ere they got the use of their arms again, and then so blinding was the flying spray and so keen the blast of the tempest, which had now veered round to the south-west, that it was difficult to distinguish one foe from another and their hands could scarcely hold their weapons. The night had also come down on the sea, dark as Hela and full of lowering storm-clouds and incessant deluges of rain.

Yet Harald, standing high on the woodwork to see where Valstran fought, if possible, caught a glimpse, as the three ships rose on the boiling crest of a great wave, of a long, high-ended vessel just sliding down the front of another billow to windward, coming along under bare poles. Raising his voice, Harald roared a lusty hail into the wild grey night as the ships plunged into the trough of the sea again, and the other sank from view, and presently the huge wooden beak of a hawk came through the foam to starboard, and an answering hail as the long ship drew out and was passing.

Harald rushed forward, long-sword in hand.

"In the name of Odin, from what parts do you come, who can fight in this storm?"

"'Tis I, Harald, late of Svolvaer, with sundry friends, and we are at war with Valstran the Dane," cried Gunhild's cousin, wondering where he had heard that rasping voice before. "Come and help us, for we are sore pressed, and this Valstran has no more honour than a wild beast!"

"And why should I help you, Harald Aslison?" sneered the rasping voice out of the dull greyness of the storm, "I, Turgrimm, have no quarrel with the Dane."

"If it is Turgrimm, you have," roared Harald back again as well as he could across the seething cauldron of the ocean, "for Asli my father, Gunhild's uncle, lies dead at this Valstran's hands, with others dear to her and me."

As it happened, this was the worst thing Harald could have said to the old Viking bully of the *Hawk*, who himself had designs on Gunhild, and had noticed, on his former visit to North-hold, how the son of Asli had watched the daughter of Bjorne as she went about the household duties, and so, instead of trying to put about and beat back to the rescue, Turgrimm held on his way, shouting in derision as the distance widened that he had no time that night to stop his vessel and share in the conflict in aid of a rash young boaster of no fame.

One glance only Harald caught of a grim, surly-faced old man with most repulsive eye, standing in the stem of his ship, and then the storm and the blackness swallowed up the sight, and with it all hope of relief.

As he sprang down into the fight again Harald saw with dismay that his men were slowly giving back, that Sigismund was sorely wounded and hard-pressed because of the loss of his left arm, and that Valstran raged along the deck with victorious fury, his long, heavy battleaxe finding none strong enough to bar its progress.

Harald rushed forward, long-sword in hand, and met the Dane, there was a short passage of arms, and down came that swinging, shining, red-dripping axe through the rain, its keen edge catching his plain helm sideways, throwing him to the deck.

And as he fell Harald caught sight of a rush of faces and heard the clash of clanging steel, and then all was dark and still.

CHAPTER IV.

The Bribing of Bjorne.

The day was bright and clear, though chilly for the season, when the *Hawk* forged up the road before North-hold, and there let down her anchor. A goodly number of vikings and servants, well laden with costly presents for his host, followed Turgrimm to the great hall, and when he met the old Earl the sinister-looking suitor for Gunhild smiled a smile that was evil to see.

He came at a most opportune time he thought, and the only rival he seriously feared was by then, he hoped, a good many fathoms under the waves off the Danish coast: so he was determined that golden-haired Gunhild, whether she liked him or not, should go back with him as his wife.

They had buried Olaf when he arrived, and in honour of the guest's wealth and rank, Earl Bjorne had a good supper laid at night in the hall, and feasted Turgrimm to his heart's content. Long they drank and talked, and loudly the men of Turgrimm laughed as the strong ale

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warmed them to jollity, while the home-folk sat around for the most part soberly silent, full of the sorrow of the last days, and of thought for their heroes away.

Editha, and Gunhild, and Freyda left the banqueters ere the night was far gone, and then one by one the men stole out or fell asleep beside their empty cups; and when Turgrimm saw this he signed to the old Earl and drew him apart to the far end of the long room, and there told his errand.

Old Bjorne stroked his grizzly chin, sorely troubled; he well knew his guest's desire, and how much he himself stood in need of assistance to get hold of that piece of land he coveted, yet he loved Gunhild well, and more dearly now that one of his sons was taken from him and the other in equal danger.

"You know, Earl," went on Turgrimm in his rasping unpleasant voice, "that my word and will carry great weight at the Thing, for I have much land and am rich, and if you want those fertile acres down by the lakeside yonder for your own—well, they shall be yours, I swear, if you will grant me Gunhild for my wife."

"Give her to you, I might," said Bjorne, "but think you that of her own free will she will choose you?"

"That must be seen," answered the other with a grim smile, "and will be seen shortly, but first give your consent, that I may have a fair chance, for she is a dutiful daughter, I trow."

"Ay," said the old man thoughtfully gazing down the dimly-lighted hall where the revellers lay snoring on the trestle tables; "ay, a very dutiful girl, Turgrimm, and I trust that she will look on you with favour. For the rest, tell her that I am willing, and after she has decided we will talk again."

"So be it," said Turgrimm, as kindly as his rough tongue would allow, and then Bjorne led his guest to the sleeping chamber set apart for strangers, and left him for the night.

Now Gunhild was up early the next morning, more with idea to get away from the house and find some solitude in which to think on her besetting danger than for any other reason, and early, too, was Turgrimm. Not far from the gravel shore of the lake where she and Harald had told their love, the Viking caught her up and poured into her ear such clumsy words and phrases as with him did duty for a declaration of undying affection and regard.

"Pretty one!" he said awkwardly, while the girl shrank from his touch. "You are not frightened at me surely; at me—who am wealthy and can grant all that your fancy may desire?"

"You cannot make me love you," said Gunhild, edging away at each step he made towards her, "and as for your riches, keep them, or bestow them on some old woman of your own age."

"You are sharp of tongue, my pretty one," cried Turgrimm, attempting and failing to seize the slender fingers between his own; "but I pray you to think twice before you refuse me, for your father has given his consent, and mine you will have to be whether you will or no, because my will knows no bending to another's!"

This and much more he said more or less clumsily, but Gunhild was not moved to aught save alternate laughter and scorn, and at last slipped past him and flew down the path towards home with a heavy heart, and left the Viking standing there by the lake with a black scowl on his evil face and mortification and rage and stern resolve in his evil heart.

Early that day he sought out Earl Bjorne, and with a very bad grace told him of his failure, and demanded that Gunhild be given to him forthwith, and the wedding-day fixed as soon as the women-folk could be ready.

"I would fain wait till Sigismund and Harald come home," said the old Earl hesitatingly. "To give up Gunhild will be a heavy price for this land."

"Then to this land that you want—and that is very good and desirable land"—put in the crafty Turgrimm, "and to all the rich cloth-stuffs and jewels I have brought you, and the aid of my fighting men in all your future quarrels or needs, I will add a new long ship from my own building-shed—a ship that shall be fleeter than any now on Viking cruise."

Right skilfully he worked on the one weak place in the old Earl's mind—the love of money that was his one besetting sin—and so, though inwardly ill at ease, Bjorne gave the promise at last on condition that Turgrimm, on his part, fulfilled his offer. It was a heavy bribe for a girl in those warlike times, and, to do him justice, Bjorne thought that with a man who was ready to give so much for her, Gunhild could not well be unhappy.

Turgrimm went about with a most insufferable air of mastery the next few days, though he was not at Gunhild's side so much as an accepted suitor should be, nor so happy when there as another who was far away would have been. He felt a strange uneasiness about the possibilities of some survivor from the sea-fight coming to condemn him and snatch the prize away just when it was within his grasp, and he was ever urging on the submissive Bjorne—who was already counting his gain—to hasten the ceremony, that he might sail away to Dertheim and there instal Gunhild as the mistress of his home.

But the women would not be hurried. They disliked the overbearing thane and spared no ingenuity to delay the fateful hour, and some sharp words had Bjorne heard from Editha, and many tearful intreaties from Gunhild herself, who longed with all her soul for Harald's return; and much work had he to keep peace between the men of North-hold and the followers of his guest, which latter the servants treated with such scant courtesy that they almost lived apart—two factions under one roof.

The days went on; there was no sign of the absent cousins, no further excuse for putting off the wedding feast, and so one sunny morning miserable Gunhild woke to find that it was her marriage-day, and that before night she would be aboard the *Hawk* and leaving her home perhaps for ever, united to a man she loathed.

Very bitter were her thoughts as her maid Iduna dressed her for the day and combed her long, luxuriant golden locks and put the silver shoes upon her feet and bade her carry a cheerful face for her own sake; and heavy as a band of lead and hateful as a slave's fetters felt the golden hoop set with diamonds that Turgrimm had brought for her to wear upon her queenly head in honour of the event of becoming his bride.

Sad and silent Gunhild went down to the feast, and melancholy sat the invited guests round the tables, while Turgrimm ate and drank with boisterous mirth and cracked coarse jokes at which only himself and his men laughed, and Bjorne hung his head even while thinking of his future possessions, and Editha and Freyda sat together, disdainful of the scene. From the first feast the company were to adjourn to the marriage-room for the nuptials to be performed, and Gunhild dreaded the rising from the table, and hoped that the meal would be well prolonged.

"If Harald would only return!" she cried out to herself in the anguish of her soul. "If Harald would only return—if, indeed, he will ever return!"

Turgrimm, whose hateful presence was near her, heard the stifled cry which she could not suppress, and turned to her with a brimming beaker uplifted to his lips.

"Harald, my pretty one, will never return, for he must be under the sea by this, or he would be here! Drink, sweet one, to his good fortune in Odin's Hall!"

Not an atom of the keen sting of the sarcastic words of the half-drunken Viking escaped Gunhild, and with a sudden access of anger and disgust, she seized the cup nearest to her hand and dashed the contents in his leering face.

With a wild oath the amazed Turgrimm rose spluttering to his feet, and at that instant the great oaken door was flung wide open, and a man strode into the hushed room.

(To be continued.)

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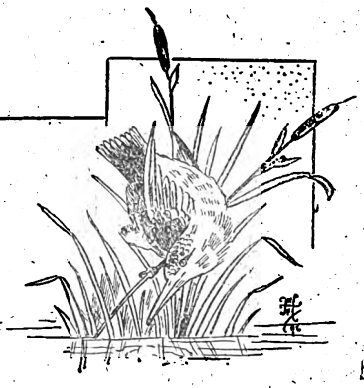
THE FLOWERED PLATE.



I STILL remember well a horrible story of the invasion which my nurse used to tell me when I was a child.

It was of the first German invasion, in 1814.

My nurse's grandmother was a poor old woman who lived in a cabin in the middle of a forest, somewhere near La Fère. This charming person was quite toothless, covered with innumerable wrinkles, and as withered and yellow as an old poplar. The country folk were ignorant of her exact age. Her husband had been a soldier in the Guards, and if in a gay mood, she would willingly, when out gathering wood, tell many a tale of the old days, when the Duke of Orleans was Regent.

Marianne was sixty-five years old, at least. Her husband had been dead for many years; he was killed, she said, at Valmy. Her only daughter was in service in the town, and she lived quite alone in her cabin, subsisting wretchedly from day to day upon such stray pickings as she could steal from under the bushes when the gamekeepers' backs were turned.

One day there was great excitement in the village near Marianne's home. The woodmen stood about all the day long, open-mouthed, with their hatchets idle in their hands, watching the retreating remnant of the French army pass through the village. There were the old grenadiers, with drooping moustachios, soiled, torn uniforms, and ragged gaiters; there were the artillerymen, with their caps drawn down over their ears; their horses were dragging along painfully the empty, dull-rumbling waggons. The gallant cuirassiers stooped and drooped upon their steeds, and many a dent could be detected in their armour. All these passed like a whirlwind, pell-mell. It was a melancholy sight.

On the following morning at daybreak, some peasants knocked at Marianne's door.

"Quick, Marianne! be quick!" cried they; "let us save ourselves; the Uhlans are coming!"

"The Uhlans cannot harm me, my poor friends," replied Marianne, "for I have nothing to lose."

So Marianne remained alone in the forest. She went out, as usual, into the woods, returned with her apron full of dry branches, and proceeded to set about her little bit of cooking. She began by unhooking her large pot, which she placed upon the fire in preparation for her evening meal.

The old woman had not spoken the exact truth in asserting that she had nothing to lose. The only plate she possessed was a very beautiful specimen of delf ware, patterned with blue flowers. This plate was the only one of its kind in all the forest land, and it had been the cherished ornament of the cabin for the last fifteen years. Marianne prized it above everything else.

* * * * *

Two hours later, the foremost scouts of the enemy made their appearance. There was the thud of horses' feet, the scrunch of dead leaves, the sound of breaking branches; finally, a violent banging upon the door of the tiny, tumble-down cottage.

A German officer stood there, covered with dust. His epaulettes were concealed beneath a large cloak.

"Hallo!" said he, in French, "you do not appear to be particularly rich here. But I suppose that you can find a man something to eat?"

"Indeed, monsieur," replied the woman, "I have nothing. If you ask but a little, it is yet too much. I have nothing—nothing at all!"

"You lie!" said the officer roughly. "Why is that pot upon the fire?"

"I was going to make a little broth, monsieur."

"Very good. Make your broth; it will do very well for Hermann! Take in this man, and feed him for me; give him your broth, bread, and bacon. We will return this way to-morrow."

Hermann fastened his horse to a tree, and the rest of the troop disappeared in the direction of the town, in search of wealthier prey.

The Uhlan strode with heavy tread into the cabin, and by means of expressive gestures demanded food. He was hungry, for His Majesty's soldiers did not dine every day.

Marianne brought out all her table-vessels; a hunting-cup which had belonged to her husband, a wooden bowl, a cracked glass, and the famous flowered plate.

Hermann demanded food, and because the broth was not yet quite ready, he flew into a terrible passion; he stormed and fumed, broke up the chairs, smashed the glass, and buried his knife up to the handle in the table of white wood.

Meanwhile, the old woman, trembling in every limb, and with tightly set jaws (teeth she had none!) was stirring with a wooden spoon the contents of her pot, which was droning a monotonous song over the fire of vine-branches.

All the time that she was doing this, and attending to her pot, in which great bubbles were now forming upon the surface of the liquid, she kept her eye upon the blue plate—her precious, flowered plate—which she momentarily expected to see shattered and added to the Prussian's hecatomb.

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In order to avert this disaster, she laid upon the plate a small piece of bacon and a roll of bread. Hermann attacked these viands ferociously. He ate and ate; until the bread had vanished, and the bacon was but a dream. Yet the Uhlan hungered still. With a gesture of demand, he fixed his eyes upon the pot still singing upon the fire.

The woman again put a little bread and a small piece of bacon—all of the latter that remained to her—upon the blue plate. Then she went softly, softly, back to her pot.

With a satisfied air, she gave her spoon one more turn. The broth was boiling furiously; enormous bubbles were dancing madly all over its surface.

It was a great exertion to lift off the great pot. It took all Marianne's strength, all her care, to carry it steadily in her two hands. The Uhlan was still engrossed in the consumption of the bread and bacon, although, doubtless, enjoying also the appetising odour wafted from the uncovered pot behind him, in which the broth was murmuring its last strains.

The old woman hobbled towards her unwelcome guest, taking extreme care to make no sound, and bearing with great difficulty the full pot. Painfully she lifted it behind the man's head. Hermann, utterly unconscious of her proximity and his own peril, continued his meal. Then, with one supreme effort, she turned the pot upside down over his head, and the boiling liquid flowed all over him.

He fell, his whole body horribly scalded, his head still completely covered by the great pot.

Old Marianne, locking the door of her cabin behind her, went forth calmly into the forest.

That is how my nurse's grandmother saved her flowered plate. LE VIER.

Lorry, Mamie, and I.

LORRY is a dog, Mamie is the sweetest creature that ever trod on earth, and I am I.

I first met Mamie at a crowded ballroom, and sat out a delightful dance with her. I am a very nervous man, and every word that Mamie said caused my heart to jump; nevertheless, just as her next partner was coming up to claim her, I managed to ask her if she would allow me to visit her.

"Yes," she called back over her shoulder, "No. 3. And—come soon."

I saw her partner turn round and look at me, and the expression on his face wasn't pleasant. I couldn't bear to see Mamie dancing with anyone else, and so I went away.

A day or two later I was walking about in the vicinity of No. 3. I had passed and repassed the house many times, and was suffering from nervous excitement. My heart was fluttering within me, and my feet almost refused to carry me. At last I summoned up my fast oozing courage, sprang up the massive steps with the same feelings as one who visits the dentist, and rang at the bell. There, it was done. There was no chance of escape; already the butler was at the door.

Was Mamma at home? No, she was out. Was Mamie at home? Yes, she was. Er, oh, yes, and before I had time to say a word I found the door had closed behind me.

There was no possible escape, for already we were at the drawing-room door. A moment later the butler came back again. Mamie would be in in a few minutes; would I take a chair?

I looked round for the most effective seat for me to sit in. Yes, this will do nicely; I will be in this position when she comes in. What had I better be doing though? An album of photographs; nothing could be better. I began turning over the leaves, and wondering if I should come across Mamma. Good gracious, supposing that this fat old lady was she! If Mamie was going to grow up like that!

I suddenly began to wonder whether my tie was straight; should I have time to steal over to the looking glass and have an inspection? I lay down the book and creep across the room. Yes, everything is irreproachable. Not a hair on my head is rough, my frock coat is perfect—stay! A speck of dust on the sleeve. I take my handkerchief and carefully remove it. Then I have to arrange my handkerchief again in my pocket.

All this takes time, and before I am able to get back to my chair again, I hear a voice outside; a silvery voice, evidently speaking to a dog.

"Now, Lorry, be a good boy. Whatever happens don't bark or snap. *Lorry*, come back, sir."

Before I have fairly had time to reach my chair again, and hurriedly take up my book (my position must have looked most affected) the door opens, and a dog bounds in—an absurd little toy dog, its ridiculous body covered with long hair, with only two twinkling eyes to be seen.

In two bounds the animal is on me; "Lorry" as Mamie calls him. He springs on to my photo album, swarms all over me, rumples my hair, and in a twinkling is back again to his mistress.

"*Lorry*, come back, sir! How *dare* you!" and in another minute I am holding Mamie's hand. She is a sweet little piece of womanhood; so rosy, and soft, and childlike.

"I have never known him do such a thing as that before," she explains. "He is usually so naughty, and snaps and bites at strangers. It shows you must be very fond of dogs—and very good-tempered." She drops her eyes as she says this and a maidenly blush steals over her face. It matches some red flowers she's wearing in her belt.

I wonder where she got those roses from. I wonder if any other fellow gave them to her. Presently I ask her this.

"They came out of the garden," she replies. "Would you like to come and see them?"

She leads the way out of the low window, and across the lawn, on to the rose beds.

"Look. That red bud would just suit your buttonhole," and she reaches over to pick it.

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"Oh!" she cries suddenly, "its thorns have caught my sleeve. *Do* release me!"

She is wearing some kind of lace frill which is hanging down over her hands. I pretend to be unentangling this, but really pin it on to two more thorns, and hold her captive. What a soft little hand it seems, as it touches my great strong ones! I whisper something into her ear, and once more her blush matches the rose; then I release her hand, and we go back to the house again, forgetting all about my buttonhole.

Mamie goes off to hunt for Mamma. I am about to sit effectively down in my chair again, when I find the dog, Lorry, has taken my seat. Now's my chance.

"I will teach you to jump upon me again, my sweet little thing," I cry, and look round for my stick. Stick and hat have disappeared, but something shining under the sofa catches my eye. It's my new Gibus, completely ruined. Under another chair I see the nob of my stick.

I seize my stick, and catch the dog, and draw him to my chair. I am about to give him the soundest flogging he ever received when the door opens, and Mamie came in.

"See," I cry, "what a playful little dog. He wants me to throw my stick for him."

"Good boy," says Mamie. "Sweet little dog! He *does* seem to be fond of you. Mamma has just gone out," she resumes..

Happy chance! Then I may come again to see her? When? "Let me see. To-day's Tuesday. Say Thursday, at this time."

Thursday. Two whole days! I groan inwardly.

On Wednesday I find myself irresistibly attracted to the street where No. 3 is situated. I wander up and down for a long while, and presently my patience is rewarded. I see Mamie and Lorry coming straight towards me. Lorry sees me at once and in a moment rushes to meet me. A twinkling of the eye, and his muddy paws have rendered me unfit to be seen.

Mamie is very sorry. How fond the dog is of me though. Then she smiles and bows, and is gone. "To-morrow at three," she calls back over her shoulder.

I go to-morrow at three, and meet Mamma, and everything is going satisfactorily.

After this I go a great many times, and gradually my nervousness disappears.

But at last the day comes when I set out for No. 3, quaking as I never quaked before. For hours I wander up and down in front of the house, until the jeers of a street boy drive me in. I spring up the steps and ring the bell without giving myself time to think.

Is Mamma in? No, she's out. Is Mamie in? Yes. I bound up the stairs, and burst into the drawing-room, and then almost faint with fear. Mamie is here already, holding Lorry in her arms, looking so childish and pretty that I am more in love than ever.

"Oh, I am so glad you've come," she cries, "do you know I was just thinking of you. I was really. I was just thinking how nice it would be if I was to give you Lorry. He always seems so fond of you and I thought —if you would take him — *do*, please now; for my sake."

Here was a chance! I should be nothing less than mad if I did not take it. I grew redder and redder, and mumbled beneath my breath. Lorry, surprised at my extraordinary expression, barked sharply.

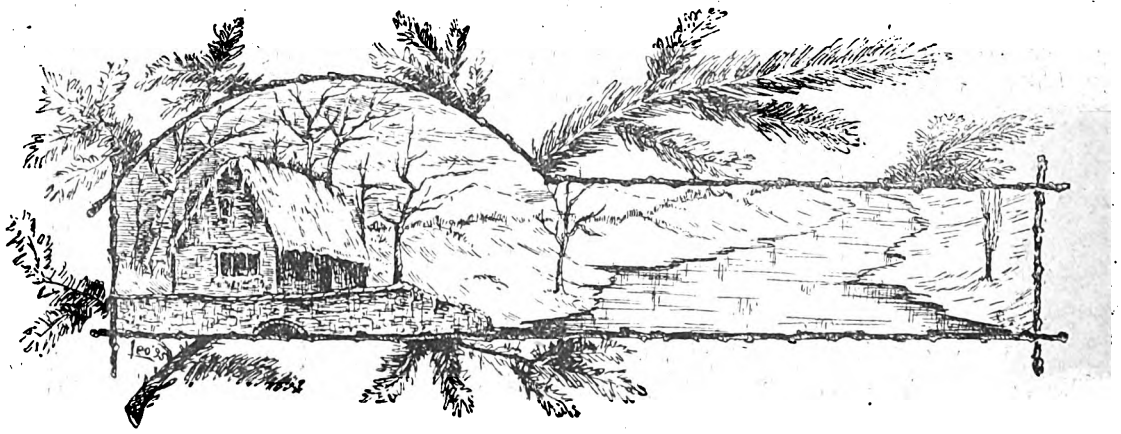
"See" I cried. "Lorry doesn't want us to part. Listen how he barks at the idea." I fell on my knees, and grew redder and redder.

"Mamie, dear, must we three ever part? Couldn't we——"

* * * * *

Lorry and Mamie and I have never parted since. I allow Lorry to live because if it hadn't been for him I should never have won my wife. When he sees me now, however, he takes care not to jump on me.

J. Marcus.



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The Tiger Slayer.

WHILE travelling through the States of Mirandea, in New Venezuela, I made the acquaintance of a man who was known as Manuel the Tiger-hunter, and one day had the opportunity of accompanying him on one of his perilous excursions.

It was about three o'clock in the morning when we reached the mountain which was our destination, and after about half-an-hour's farther walking, my strange companion paused at a turn in the narrow path which we were then pursuing, and I felt rather than saw that the dawn of a new day was close at hand.

There was a strange stir in the air, as though the feeble breath of life had come back to dead, inanimated nature. Over the eastern mountain tops the stars were growing pale. The first faint, grey tinge of dawn was coming, a long way off.

Day advanced slowly. I noted this with surprise, for all the books I had read, which gave a description of dawn in the tropics, had asserted unanimously that day came with a bound, out of the blackness of the night.

Perhaps the writers of these descriptions had waited until the sun had already reddened the eastern sky before watching for the dawn, for from the time when I noticed the first faint, grey streaks in the sky, until the sun was actually shining on the mountain tops, fully an hour elapsed.

I could have remained watching the coming day for another hour, at least, but as soon as it was light enough to see surrounding objects, Manuel carefully chose a spot which I could occupy during the impending gladiatorial contest.

The coign of vantage was the peak of high rock, which almost overhung the path which he eventually chose, and with some difficulty climbed to the top of it.

Nature, I thought, must have intended the rock for some such purpose as this, for it gave an unobstructed view of the path for some distance on each side, and I could hardly have missed seeing any animal walking upon it, for a considerable distance.

There was plenty of evidence, too, that the advantage of this peak, as a look-out station, had been appreciated and used by other hunters than man. Indications showed that wild beasts, presumably tigers, had crouched there in wait for unsuspecting prey.

This discovery did not fail to give me a mild sensation. I might be reasonably safe from the attack of a tiger in the path below; but I hesitated, when I speculated upon the consequences likely to ensue if a tiger came up, and found me occupying his own private and particular look-out.

As soon as I had comfortably concealed myself behind the rock, although in a position that permitted me to keep careful watch upon the exposed parts of the path, Manuel disappeared. He was standing behind the base of a rock one moment, and the very next instant he had vanished. He must have gone like a serpent, for I heard no sound.

Then I was alone on a tiger's favourite resort in an uninhabited South American forest. It was hardly a pleasant sensation, especially as my revolver seemed to be, as doubtless it was, a very inadequate weapon. A suspicion might have crossed my mind that Manuel had left me there as a bait for a tiger, but I would not give it a moment's credence.

There were noises on the mountain-side by this time, and some of them so distinct that I could distinguish them. Small animals were scampering about in the undergrowth, and birds were calling in the trees. A commotion among the birds down the path attracted my attention, and I wondered if a tiger had stirred them up, or if Manuel had strayed as far away as that.

A few moments later there was another commotion in the distance on the other side of me, but I gave little heed to it. On the right-hand side of the path, a small creature, something like a woodchuck, stopped short in his leisurely morning walk, and sniffed suspiciously at the air. I was to leeward of him in the light breeze that had sprung up, and so he could not have scented me. He sniffed a moment in the direction of the first

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disturbance, and then suddenly dived headlong into the undergrowth.

Assuredly there was something off to windward that he was afraid of.

The disturbance ceased after a time, and then the mountain side was still again.

Looking down over the rock a few moments later, I found Manuel gazing up at me. He pointed to the left in the direction of the second disturbance and again disappeared. It is probable that on this occasion he hid himself in the undergrowth alongside of the path.

I gave my undivided attention to the distant fluttering of birds. It was a curious sort of circus that the birds were having. The little things circled about in the tops of the trees and screamed shrilly one to the other. It might have been a huge snake that frightened and fascinated them, or it might have been a tiger. Manuel knew, in all probability, but it made no sign.

The disturbance came a little nearer, but it seemed to me that it moved very slowly. If a tiger were coming along the path he should, in my opinion, have made better time.

I calmed my impatience by assuring myself that if it were a tiger he would come fast enough when he once got wind of me.

It was a long half hour of suspense before the disturbance came within reasonable distance. Before half of that time had passed I was satisfied that something very objectionable to birds was walking leisurely along the path, and perhaps stopping now and then in hope of surprising one of the birds unawares.

At length the thing was just beyond the turn in the path. In a moment or two I should see what it was.

Then I became conscious that Manuel was standing in the path, with a short spear held in a horizontal position over his shoulder. This was interesting, and at the same time very suggestive.

I concentrated my entire nervous system in an intense contemplation of the turn in the path. The suspense was awful.

Ah! what was that? A striped and spotted animal suddenly stood out in the open. His tail swung slowly from side to side, and his smooth coat moved nervously with some passing emotion. It was the tiger of the South American forests. He had stopped with one foot advanced, and with his head in the attitude of attention. He had seen something in the path before him. It was Manuel, who was standing as immovable as the rock beside him.

It was a beautiful beast, all silk and softness and graceful curves. I thought it was a pity that so beautiful a thing should be hunted to death, but at the same time I reflected that this wonderfully beautiful exterior covered a nature that was the incarnation of ferocity.

I do not know how long Manuel and the tiger faced each other there in the narrow path like gladiators.

It seemed a very long time.

This was the test.

The tiger waited instinctively to see the strange thing before him turn and run away as everything else in the forest invariably did, but greatly to his surprise the thing stood its ground like an immovable rock. The tiger was king of the forest, and he knew it, and when he had made up his mind that this thing was not going to run, he came forward slowly to investigate. This was courage even in a wild brute, and I respected him for it. I doubt if the lion or the tiger of India has this unshakable nerve.

I looked at Manuel as the tiger came slowly and cautiously along the path. He stood like a bronze statue with his spear held over his right shoulder. Not so much as an eyelid moved.

I confess that during this trying time I was a bit nervous. This was a new way of hunting to me, and a decided novelty in the actions of a wild beast which had not been attacked. I should expect an attack from a grizzly bear after it had been wounded, but assuredly the bear would not take the aggressive as this lithe and beautiful beast was doing. I will acknowledge that my heart thumped against my blue flannel shirt so hard that I was afraid that the noise would attract the attention of the tiger.

Slowly came the tiger; like a rock stood Manuel. It looked as though the case had been reversed, and that the tiger, instead of the half-breed, was the hunter.

At length the tiger was within touching distance of the man.

He looked the bronze figure over from head to foot, and then thrust forward his head and sniffed at the man's feet. Back the great beast sprang like a steel spring. The figure was flesh and blood.

The tiger's tail twitched from side to side like a flail; the great jaws opened with a snarl. Quickly the beast measured his distance and crouched with quivering sinews for a spring. Such calm courage was grand beyond all description. It was matched only by the steadfast nerve of the man.

Now came the crisis.

I could see the huge muscles heaving under the striped skin. In another second the tiger would leap upon his prey.

In that instant the hunter made a motion with his left arm as quick as light itself. He tore the handkerchief from his neck and thrust it full in the tiger's face. Up went the tiger's head in a quiver of electrical amazement. Then the hunter's poised right arm shot forward with incredible force, and the spear buried itself half-way to the handle in the tiger's neck.

Ah, it was nobly done; and throughout it all, from the beginning until the wonderful ending, the hunter's nerve never faltered so much as by the hair's breadth. Before I could catch my breath, and swallow the lumps of apprehension that had risen unbidden in my throat, the fierce beast was dead in the path.

I scrambled down from the rock, and stood beside the dead forest king. Manuel picked up his handkerchief and pulled out his spear. There was a faint suggestion of a smile about his impassive face.

"Does the Señor Inglesi believe?" he asked.

"He does," I answered, and I gave him my hand in that universal brotherhood of which civilisation can never efface. By the side of that dead tiger the savage and the son of civilisation were on the one common level of man. There could be no difference.

Arnold Rees.

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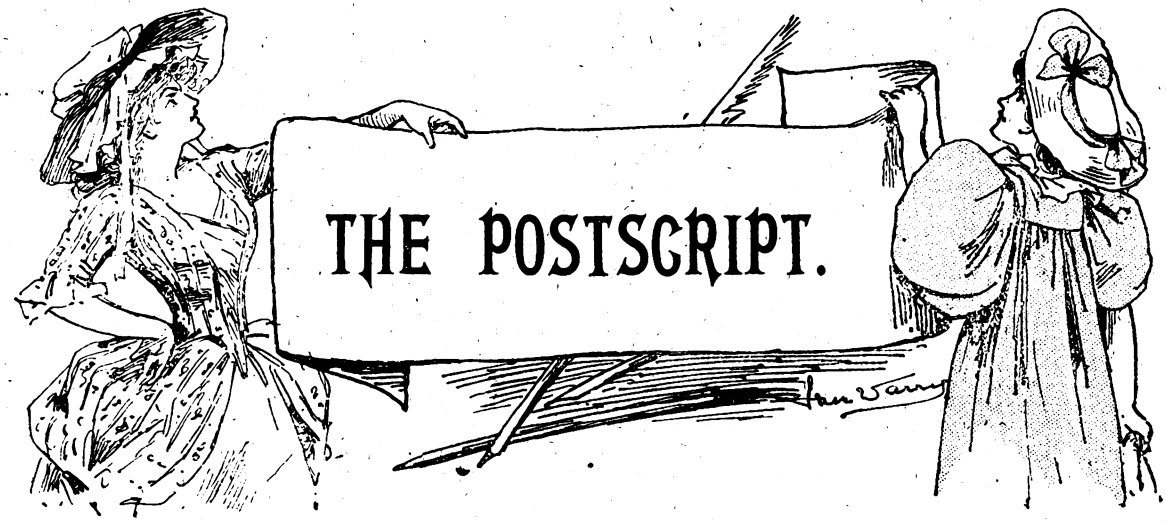

THE POSTSCRIPT.

Mlle. Pauline de Glanes had finished her shopping in the Rue Hausman, and was walking slowly up the shady side of the street, in the direction of her aunt's house in the Champs Elysées—her home for the next two months—when she became vaguely conscious that someone—a man—was following her.

Coming out of the fashionable photographer's further down the street, where she had gone to arrange for a sitting, she had narrowly escaped from colliding with a frock-coated, shiny-hatted, curly-haired young gentleman. In the short interval occupied by their mutual apologies she had had time to notice first that the boy—for he was really little more—had a great deal more than his share of good looks, and secondly, that he was regarding her with undisguised admiration.

Then she had gone on up the street, with an unmistakable blush on her cheeks, and a palpable quickening of the pulse beneath her slender wrist. She walked with the long graceful swing which is as common among the women of the stage as it is rare elsewhere. Her skirt, trimmed elaborately, but in perfect taste, seemed to move of itself in unison with her limbs, rather than be carried along with them. From the roses in the big hat which crowned her shapely head, to the pointed toes of her little morocco leather shoes she looked as charming as you could wish, and by the time she had reached No. 58, in the avenue, at least half-a-dozen men had fallen hopelessly in love with her.

As she stooped to put her key in the door she happened to glance down the avenue. The boy, whose appearance had been so forcibly impressed on her in the Rue Hausman, was standing at the corner gazing intently at her. She blushed violently and fumbled energetically at the key, (which, as luck would have it, seemed to have jammed), looked up again, impelled by some irresistible attraction, and caught the boy's gaze full, blushed still more, wrenched furiously at the key, and at last, with a desperate effort, turned it and disappeared within.

The moment the door closed behind her the boy advanced rapidly down the street, picked up the envelope which, unnoticed by her, had dropped from her pocket when she took out the key, carefully scrutinised the address, smiled, put the envelope into his breast pocket, and with a glance up at the windows of the house as if to impress it on his memory, lounged off down the street humming quietly to himself the chorus of the latest popular *chanson*.

* * * * *

"It's shameful! What sort of woman does he think I am? Oh, how I hate men!" and Pauline de Glanes' little French shoes beat a contemptuous tattoo on her bedroom carpet, and her little hands doubled up into dainty fists, suggesting that she would like to enter into violent physical warfare with the whole of the other sex then and there.

The innocent cause of this outburst lay, sublimely unconscious of the storm it had aroused, on her lap, the creamiest and roughest of creamy rough envelopes, addressed in a straggling masculine hand, with a corresponding sheet of note-paper protruding. Pauline pulled the letter out again, and half pouting, half crying, read it over for the sixth or seventh time. It was dated from the Club Olympique, and ran as follows:

Dear Mlle. de Glanes,—Pardon the liberty which I, a perfect stranger, take in addressing you. Your name and address I discovered from the envelope you dropped. The only excuse I have to offer—if it be an excuse—is that I cannot help it. The moment I saw you on the Rue Hausman I felt that, come what might, I would try to make your acquaintance. Ah! Mademoiselle, you know not how lovely you are. I know that by addressing you like this, I run the risk of forfeiting your esteem and perhaps losing sight of you for ever. But I cannot help it; I must take my chance Oh, pardon the presumption, but can you find it in your heart to permit me to call on you? Of course, I know that I have never been formally introduced to you, but I know if you will let me call we shall be sure to find that we have lots of mutual acquaintances who can arrange a proper introduction.

Yours in despair,
Andre de Saint Aydredon.

Pauline's tattoo on the carpet continued during the reading of the letter, and once or twice a tear fell and blurred the words.

When she came to the boyish sprawling signature at the end she got up from her chair and began to walk hurriedly up and down the room.

"It's abominable," she murmured, "to be insulted like that, abominable! And he was a gentlemanly-looking boy, too. Couldn't he see I was a lady? I am sure"—she went over to the glass, and gazed anxiously into it—"no; I am sure I don't look like that sort of woman—no, not a bit. Write to him? Yes, I will, and at once, too, and tell him what I think."

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She sat down at the little escritoire and began:

Avenue Champs Elysées, May, 1894.

Sir,—Your letter has surprised me exceedingly. I am not in the habit of receiving such insulting——

She paused for a word, resting her elbows on the table and her chin on her hands. A photograph of a man—her brother—stood on the escritoire in front of her. She had always considered him good looking. Now, somehow, unconsciously, she began to compare him with the man to whom she was writing—to the latter's decided advantage. After all, she thought, Olivier was really nothing much to look at.

She took the frame up and scrutinised the picture closely. Now she came to consider matters critically, Olivier was not very far removed from absolute plainness. His nose was really almost a snub, his eyes too small, the forehead, the squareness of which she had once thought an attraction, seemed to have become obtrusively aggressive. It looked as if it were trying to push its way out of the picture. And the hair was uncompromisingly straight and flat. It was ridiculous! Men with hair like that ought to be made to curl it, like the girls did. Curly hair was so much prettier. Like, for instance——

A faint pink painted her cheeks. She took up her pen and set to work at the letter again.

Sir,—Your letter has surprised me exceedingly. I am not in the habit of receiving such insulting communications. I only take notice of yours at all because——

After all, why was she writing at all? Wouldn't it be far better to take no notice? Wouldn't—No, she would write, just to let him know that that sort of thing might be done to a chorus-girl—not to her, or any woman of her sort. It should be a lesson to him for the future. There was no reason why a man should treat a woman like that just because he had money—every one in Paris knew the St. Ayredons, and the old Baron was reputed a millionaire many times over. Yes, he certainly was handsome, too, this young aristocrat. How well he looked in his frock coat and glossy hat! It was all very well to run down men's clothes, but they suited some men to perfection. And good-looking young men were not too plentiful.

He had money, too. How lucky some people were to be sure. She must really get her father to raise her allowance. As it was, she was always in debt. Only that morning, Sylvestine had sent in her bill for the third time, with a rude little note to the effect that it was very much overdue and must really be settled at once. And there was that delicious little pony Lablache wanted her to buy. It certainly was dirt cheap at 1,000 francs. But, of course, cheap or not, it was quite out of the question. Equally, of course, that horrid Gailliard girl would jump at it. Lablache said that she was dying to have it, but he would rather sell it to a lady who knew something about horses—like herself, naturally—if he could. It was hard to be done out of it just for a paltry 1,000 francs. Still there was no help for it and——

Good gracious, six o'clock! She had been half-an-hour over that stupid letter already. It must be finished at once.

She took up her pen again:

I only take notice of yours because it is well you should know that though that sort of thing may do with some women, it won't do for me. For the future you had better confine such attentions to——

Chorus-girls? No! I don't like that. Besides, after all, he's only a boy, and chorus-girls, I know, are awfully expensive. Olivier told me so! Let me see; ah, that's it:

to women who care for that sort of thing. I do not.

Pauline de Glanes.

No, of course I don't!

The letter was duly blotted and an envelope addressed. But instead of folding it up at once, Pauline hesitated a moment, bit the end of her quill pen, took up first paper, then envelope, and put both down again, fidgeted in her chair, rubbed one dainty little foot against the other, and finally her cheeks, ears, and even her neck suffused with blushes, snatched her pen and hurriedly scribbled another line.

It ran thus:

P S—If after what I have written you dare to call, please don't knock, but ring three times.

Allen Goodman.

A TEN-POUND PRIZE.

(See Opposite Page.)

On the opposite page is a puzzle picture composed of 88 squares. If these squares be rearranged in a certain order they will form a real picture.

We offer a prize of £10 to the first person who sends the correct solution. In order to give readers in all parts of the United Kingdom as equal a chance as possible, none of the solutions received will be opened until Thursday, April 23rd, when all those received will be considered together. In the event of two or more correct solutions being included in one day's post, the prize will be given to the sender of the *neatest* one. Consolation Prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

If no correct solution be received on or before Tuesday, April 28th, 1896, the Ten-Pound Prize will be given to the sender of the solution then to hand which is most nearly correct.

Pictures should be packed flat or folded, not rolled, and the outside wrapper must be marked "June."

N.B.—To make the puzzle more difficult some of the squares have been turned upside down, others sideways.

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The Abode of Ideal Life.

Translated from the Polish.

ONCE, on a bright moonlight night, the wise and mighty Krishna communed with himself and said: "I thought man was the most beautiful of created things, but I am mistaken. I see the lotus-flower bow to the passing breeze. How it surpasses all living creatures in beauty! Its leaves are just closed in the silvery moonlight, and I cannot turn my eyes away from it. Yes, there is nothing like the lily among men," he repeated, sighing.

But a moment later he thought: "Why should not I, who am a god, by the might of my word, create a being which would be to mankind what the lotus is among the flowers? So be it then for the delight of humanity and of the earth. Lotus flower, be transformed into a maiden and stand before me."

The waves rippled softly as the beating of swallows' wings, the night became clearer, the moon shone deeper, the night-song of the thrush rose higher, and suddenly died away. And it was as Krishna had commanded. Before him stood the lotus-flower in human form. The god himself was startled.

"Thou wert the flower of the waters," said he; "be henceforth the flower of my thoughts, and speak."

And the maiden began to whisper, softly as the murmur of white lotus-leaves kissed by the summer airs: "Lord, thou has transformed me into a living creature; where wilt thou that I dwell? Remember, Lord, that when I was a flower I trembled, and closed my leaves at every breath of wind. I was smitten with fear, Lord, at the rain and the storm, the thunder and the lightning; yes, I was even overcome with fear of the scorching rays of the sun. Thou commandest me to become a living, breathing lotus-flower. I have, consequently, retained my former nature, and now, Lord, I am troubled at the earth and at everything that lives upon it. Where wilt thou, then, that I make my abode?"

Krishna lifted his serene eyes to the stars, meditated a while, and asked: "Wouldst thou live on the mountains' peaks?"

"There is frost and snow; I am afraid, Lord."

"Well, then, I will build a palace of crystal for thee on the ocean floor."

"In the depths of the water there glide serpents and horrible monsters. O, Lord, I am afraid!"

"Wilt thou, then, dwell on the boundless prairie?"

"O, Lord, the prairie is ravaged with thunder and the whirlwind as with the tramp of wild herds!"

"How, then, shall I provide for thee, thou flower that hast become flesh? Ah, in the caves of Ellora there live holy hermits. Wilt thou, retired from the world, make thy dwelling in the caves?"

"There rules the darkness, Lord. I am afraid!"

Then Krishna sat him down upon a stone and leant his head upon his hand. The maiden stood before him, trembling, and quaking. At that moment the fiery crimson of dawn glowed in the east; the waves of ocean, the palm-trees, and the bamboos glistened with gold. The rosy-winged flamingoes, the blue cranes, and the white swans in the waters joined their notes in chorus with the birds in the jungle, and immediately was heard the clang of harp-strings extended upon a shell of pearl, and the words of a song in human voice.

Then Krishna aroused himself from his dream and said: "The poet Walmiki greets the rising sun."

A little later the purple veil of dawn was withdrawn from the flower-decked creepers, and Walmiki appeared by the lake. At sight of the transformed lotus-flower he ceased to play, the pearly instrument slipped softly from his fingers to earth, his hands dropped to his sides, and he stood as speechless as though Krishna had transformed him into a tree.

And the god was pleased at this admiration of his handiwork, and said: "Wake, Walmiki, and speak."

And Walmiki spoke: "I love." This was the only word he could recall, the only word to which he could give expression.

Krishna's countenance glowed suddenly. "Wondrous maiden," he said: "I have found a place fit for thee. Dwell in the poet's heart."

And Walmiki repeated: "I love."

The will of the mighty Krishna, the Divine will, drew the maiden to the poet's heart. At the god's behest also the heart of Walmiki became transparent as glass. Glad as a summer day, peaceful as a wave of the Ganges, advanced the maiden to her allotted place; but suddenly, as she looked deeper into Walmiki's heart, her countenance paled, and fear agitated her with its icy breath. Krishna was startled.

"Sentient flower," he asked, "art thou afraid even of the heart of the poet?"

"Lord," answered the maiden, "what sort of a dwelling place is this that thou hast appointed me? Here in this one heart I behold snowy mountain peaks and ocean depths peopled with terrible creatures; and here, too, the prairie with its whirlwind and storm; here, too, the dark caves of Ellora; hence I am again afraid, oh Lord!"

But the good and wise Krishna said: "Calm thyself sentient flower. If in Walmiki's heart there are solitary snowfields, be thou the breath of spring to melt them. If there are ocean depths in his heart, be thou the pearl of those waters. Are there prairie wastes, then sow them with the flowers of happiness, and if thou findest there dark caves as of Ellora, so be thou in this darkness as a ray of sunlight."

And Walmiki, who had meanwhile recovered his speech, added: "And be blessed!"

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The Great Middlewick Bank Robbery.

CHAPTER XIII.

This Beats Anything I've ever Come Across.

Despite Jack Burton's common sense, and in the face of his strong fight against it, a dreadful suspicion began taking shape in his mind. It was that Bobby Roberts was either innocent of the strange disappearance of Alfred Taylor, or, at the most, was but a *particeps criminis* therein. In other words, Frank Rutherford, the suspected book-keeper of the bank, was the guilty person.

This at first was so violent a supposition that Burton dismissed it with a feeling of self-scorn that he should have allowed it to enter his mind. But it came again and again until it secured an abiding-place in his brain, and he was compelled to think it over in all its aspects.

There were a hundred facts against it and only a few in its favour, but these few outweighed all the others.

Let a man in Jack Burton's position once start upon a line of speculation, and the labyrinth becomes intricate, involved and endless, with the result that all is a hopeless tangle beyond his power to unravel.

It is useless to follow the theories which became a veritable torment to him; we have only to trace actions and their results.

Now that Roberts had withdrawn, for the time at least, Burton decided to give attention to Mr. Rutherford. He had learned from Taylor of the singular conduct of the young man on the night that Mr. Bryant visited Burton, when the latter was serving as watchman in the bank. In what manner Rutherford and Roberts could be jointly concerned in the abduction of Taylor passed comprehension, but, as has been said, the suspicion that such was the case now almost amounted to a certainty.

Burton was badly in need of sleep. He had had little slumber for the past forty-eight hours. It was foolish to presume too far upon his powers of endurance. He therefore flung himself on his bed, and, with that fortunate gift which a few men possess, sank into a rest that was unbroken until night had come. Upon awaking he descended to the dining-room, where a good meal completely refreshed him.

Burton looked up in the countenance of the banker.

From the hotel he went straight to the cottage of the old couple with whom he had lodged while serving as watchman at the Middlewick Bank. So well known had he become in the little country town because of his connection with the arrest of the burglars that a complete change of clothing was necessary to avoid recognition.

This completed, he sauntered to the outskirts of the town, beyond the further house. There, when certain that no one saw him, he made a still greater change in his personal appearance. He fastened a pair of bushy whiskers over his beard, carried a cane and walked with a slight limp, depressing his shoulders as though weighed down by a score of years more than belonged to him.

This disguise, as has already been stated, was complete so long as it was not subjected to scrutiny by day or the glare of a strong artificial light. Nothing could serve his purpose better when helped by the gloom of the street. No fear now of anyone taking him for the new watchman who had resigned his situation, as may be said, amid a blaze of triumph.

It was between nine and ten when Burton strolled past Frank Rutherford's home. He had no reason to expect anything in the way of discovery.

A dim light was burning in the upper room, which he had learned belonged to the young man.

"He is out and not likely to return for some time," was the conclusion of the watcher, who continued his stroll towards Mr. Bryant's residence, that being the most likely spot to find the book-keeper in case he wished to meet him.

A bright light in the sitting-room of the banker's house showed that in all probability Burton's surmise was correct.

That being so, what good could the knowledge do him?

But when opposite the house the front door opened, and the bank manager himself came down the graveled walk and turned to the right, that is to say towards the open country.

"He wishes to take a stroll before going to bed," was Burton's conclusion, as he turned and kept pace with him on the other side of the street.

Mr. Bryant walked slowly, so that Burton could not keep abreast of him without attracting notice. He therefore gradually walked on ahead; and, as it would have been still more suspicious to follow him out of town, the limping individual crossed the street and turned back over his own route.

This brought the couple face to face within the radius of the rays of the street lamp.

Secure in his own disguise, Burton looked up in the countenance of the banker, who merely glanced at him, with a neighbourly nod of his head. Burton was struck by the expression of anguish on the other's face. He seemed ready to sink under the weight of some overwhelming sorrow.

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"Poor man! The blow hurts him more than any of his friends suspect. Can it be he has an inkling of the truth? Does he see that the happiness, and life itself, of his favourite niece is wrapped up in this hateful mystery? Does he know that when the solution comes it means disgrace worse than death?"

Deep resentment towards Rutherford took possession of

Peered anxiously across the way.

Burton as these thoughts flashed through his mind. That any man worthy of the man who had been accepted as a trusted friend and as the suitor of the young lady's hand should have behaved as the young book-keeper had, made him the more anxious to bring his guilt home to him. If he could have seen his way open to punish him without making the innocent suffer he would eagerly have done so. But, alas! in this life it is the innocent who suffer more than the guilty.

At the next corner, Burton looked round. If Mr. Bryant had intended taking a country stroll, he had now evidently changed his mind. He was standing motionless, as though undecided what to do. Burton slackened his pace as much as he thought prudent, but again glancing round he saw that the old man was as immovable as the lamp-post beside him.

Yielding to a feeling of uneasiness, Burton slipped across the street, intending to return and keep an eye on the banker. It might be he contemplated doing violence to himself.

So absorbed had he been in watching Mr. Bryant that it was not until he started crossing the road that Burton noticed that another person was doing what he had in view. A man was coming from the direction of the banker's house, and walking so slowly that it was clear that his interest was centred in the old gentleman.

Had Burton observed him before leaving the pavement, he would have kept on his own side of the road, but having made the move he thought it best not to turn back. Thus before he had taken many more steps he was face to face with the newcomer, whom, despite the gloom, he recognised as Frank Rutherford, the book-keeper of the bank.

Rutherford hardly noticed the limping man with the cane, but peered anxiously across the way at the dimly outlined figure in the distance. It was easy for Burton to keep the younger man in view, as, but a few yards further on, he paused evidently afraid of attracting the banker's attention.

That was the tableau—the old man, silent, thoughtful, motionless beneath the glare of the lamp; the younger, still as a statue in the gloom, dimly seeing and yet intently watching the other.

Burton added himself to the scene by halting also, but at such a distance that he would not have been able to notice Rutherford had he not done so before increasing the space between them.

This distribution of character brought about another result; Burton had stopped almost in front of Mr. Bryant's house, so that by shifting his gaze he was given a good view of that building.

The light was still burning in the drawing-room, and in the gloom of the verandah he made out the figure of a young lady, whose interest doubtless centred in the two persons who had left the house but a few minutes before.

The interpretation of the whole scene could not have been plainer.

The banker, for some reason, had left his home at a later hour than usual. It might have been for a simple stroll, and it might mean much more. His niece and her lover were startled by his action, and the latter had set out to note the movements of the elder. That was what he was doing, while she, in her anxiety, could not remain indoors until the return of the watcher.

There was a flicker under the distant lamp, and for a moment the figure of the banker was revealed, then lost to sight again in the shadows. He had resumed his walk, but instead of going towards the country he was returning home.

Hardly had he started when Rutherford imitated him. Burton was only a second or two later in doing the same, so that Mr. Bryant at the further end of the line controlled the movements of the trio.

A brief walk brought the young man opposite the house he had left only a short while before. He did not cross and re-enter, as Burton expected him to do, but coughed vigorously. Immediately Miss Crossland turned and disappeared through the French windows. She understood the signal to mean that her uncle was coming back.

Burton did not think it wise to hasten his pace. He had acted his part so well that no suspicion was directed towards him. Thus it was that he had not gone far when Rutherford passed him at a sharp walk. Burton hastened his steps slightly, but so rapidly was the young man walking that he was soon out of sight.

"There's no need for me to hurry, for he's going home to bed. Still, I will give him a good-night look as I pass the house," was the watcher's conclusion.

As he turned the corner Burton observed that the light in the book-keeper's room was burning brightly, proof that he had returned and was doubtless preparing to retire. Dropping back to his slow pace, the late watchman sauntered on, intending to pass the little cottage. It was his intention to halt opposite it and wait until the light in the upper storey was extinguished.

To his astonishment, however, he discovered that a third party was ahead of him. Within the shadow of the door that had sheltered Taylor was a man, evidently with his attention fixed upon Rutherford's home. He was so deep in the shadow that Burton barely distinguished him, his notice having been attracted by a slight noise caused by a change of posture. Though the discovery was unexpected, Burton kept up his slow, regular pace, apparently looking straight ahead and noting nothing to the right or left.

But for the faint noise referred to he would have known nothing of the eavesdropper's presence, which doubtless had a significance of its own.

"Well," muttered Burton after reaching a safe distance, "matters are becoming more mixed than ever. Who can that fellow be, and what is his business there?"

The lame man made as if to turn the other corner, doing

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so for a few paces and immediately coming far enough back to see down the street he had just left.

At that moment the bright light in Rutherford's room went out and all became darkness. The stillness of the deserted street enabled Burton to hear the rapid footsteps of the watcher across the way, which began simultaneously with the extinguishing of the light. For a few seconds Burton stood in doubt, supposing the stranger was coming towards him; but the figure, he could see by the lamplight, was walking quickly in the opposite direction.

"I must meet him somehow," was the watcher's decision, and immediately he set out after him at a sharper pace than he had shown that evening.

The instant the one ahead vanished round the first corner the pursuer quickened his pace until it closely approached a run. He was sure he would be close upon him when he, too, turned the corner.

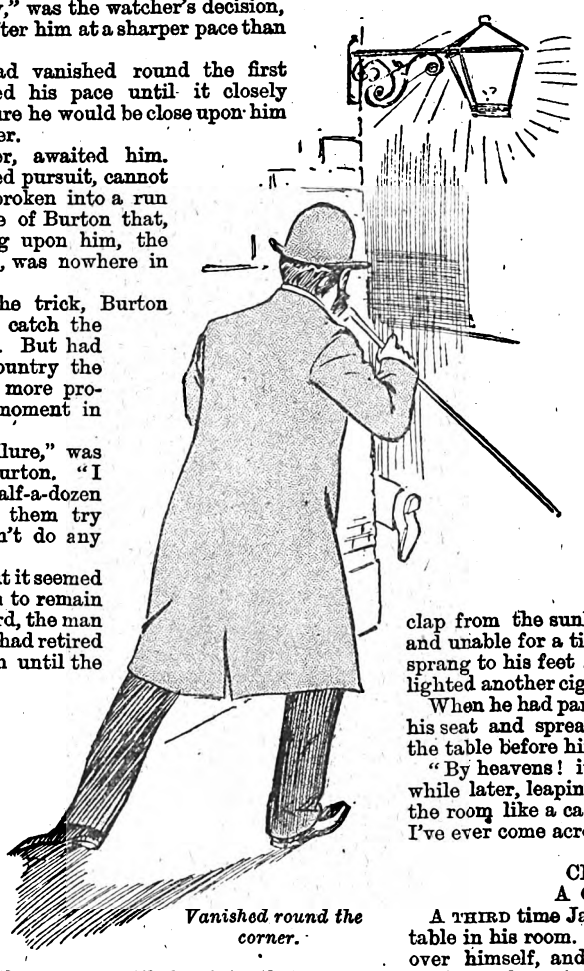
A disappointment, however, awaited him. Whether or not the man feared pursuit, cannot be told, but he must have broken into a run so much superior to the pace of Burton that, instead of the latter gaining upon him, the fugitive, as he may be called, was nowhere in sight.

Angry with himself at the trick, Burton listened intently hoping to catch the sound of the other's footsteps. But had he been miles out in the country the silence could not have been more profound than it was at that moment in that portion of Middlewick.

"To-night's work is a failure," was the disgusted conclusion of Burton. "I will send to London for half-a-dozen amateur detectives and let them try their hand. They surely can't do any worse than I have."

It was not yet midnight, but it seemed useless to the watcher for him to remain out of doors longer. Rutherford, the man whom he had set out to watch, had retired and would not be seen again until the morrow, when ten o'clock would once more see him at the bank.

The baffled watchman dropped back to his usual pace, and turned once more in the direction of Glenmora on his way to the hotel. Apparently Mr. Bryant's household had retired for the night, for the house was in darkness, though Jack Burton was right in believing that two persons, at least, beneath that roof would not close their eyes until far into the night, and even then sleep would be feverish, fitful, and tormented by the most frightful fears, misgivings and dreams that ever come to youth and age.



Vanished round the corner.

To avoid unpleasant complications, Burton slipped off his false beard and put it into his pocket before reaching the hotel. He managed also to recover from his lameness, and entered, looking very much, except as to attire, as he had looked upon his arrival in Middlewick.

It was still comparatively early for him, and after his rest during the afternoon, he felt no disposition to sleep. Nevertheless, he went to his room, paying little attention to the few loungers in the smoking-room, and without a glance at the visitors' book.

Had he scanned the written page of that book he would have learned something of importance.

Twenty-four hours and more had now gone by since Taylor's disappearance, and his friend had not picked up the faintest clue to his fate. He not only knew absolutely nothing, but was more perplexed than ever. He felt like roaming over the town the night through, and would have done so could he have felt the slightest assurance of accomplishing anything by such an action.

"Alf is dead," was his disheartened conclusion, "but how or where he met his fate may never be known."

Partly to distract his thoughts, he now turned his attention to the papers which Taylor had obtained when he made his call at Mr. Bryant's house. It will be remembered that they contained not only his handwriting but that of his book-keeper. With the paper also was the slip that had been pushed under the door of the bank on the night that Burton and Taylor were keeping watch together within.

Burton had given these a superficial examination when his friend first placed them before him, with the idea of instituting a comparison. As a relief from his worry about the detective, he now concentrated his whole attention on a minute and studied comparison of the penmanship.

It was inevitable that in the former instance he and Taylor, approaching the task with a preconceived theory, reached, as a result, the confirmation of that theory. The effect of this conclusion was still with Burton when he repeated the task. But suddenly a suppressed exclamation escaped him. A discovery came with a power that stunned him. At first it was a suspicion only, but it broke like a thunderclap from the sunlit sky, and held him breathless and unable for a time to go on with his task. He sprang to his feet and paced the room. Then he lighted another cigar and smoked earnestly.

When he had partly composed himself he resumed his seat and spread out the papers once more on the table before him, underneath the gaslight.

"By heavens! it's true!" he exclaimed, a short while later, leaping again to his feet and pacing the room like a caged lion. "This beats anything I've ever come across!"

CHAPTER XIV.

A Game of Bluff.

A third time Jack Burton sat down to the little table in his room. He had now gained the mastery over himself, and was the same cool, collected individual who had so rigorously followed the fleeing Sam Birch. He sat with his shoulder to the light, and, leaning back in his chair, scrutinised the papers for fully ten minutes, his whole mental strength concentrated upon and absorbed in the effort. When he had finished he carefully folded and placed them in an inner pocket, where he meant to guard them carefully.

"*The secret is solved,*" was his conclusion, as he settled himself more comfortably in his chair. "Strange that the truth never suggested itself to Alf or me before; I see it all now."

Looking back over the events of the past few days, Burton saw their perfect conformity to the astonishing discovery he had just made. None of the slight difficulties which confronted himself before now showed themselves; everything was smooth, clear, and complete. It was a grand triumph, but his heart sank as he realised that all this had not the remotest bearing upon the fate of his missing friend. That awful problem remained unsolved.

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The difficulties in his path, as far as that business was concerned, were as great as ever.

"Sh!"

Surely there was a noise in the room adjoining, the one which had been occupied by Alfred Taylor two nights before. Burton's heart gave a quick throb of hope at the thought that his friend had returned. He was on the point of jumping to his feet and dashing into his apartment to welcome him, but his habit of caution restrained him. Better to wait until all doubt on the question was removed.

Everything was quiet for a few minutes. Burton softly rose and again pressed his ear against the wall. Yes; someone was in the other room, moving softly about—proof that it was not the rightful occupant, for there could be no call for such precaution on his part.

A sudden thought flashed across Burton's mind.

"It's Roberts! It was he who was watching Frank Rutherford's place; he has come back to the hotel and has sneaked into Alf's room. It strikes me that it is about time I took part in this business."

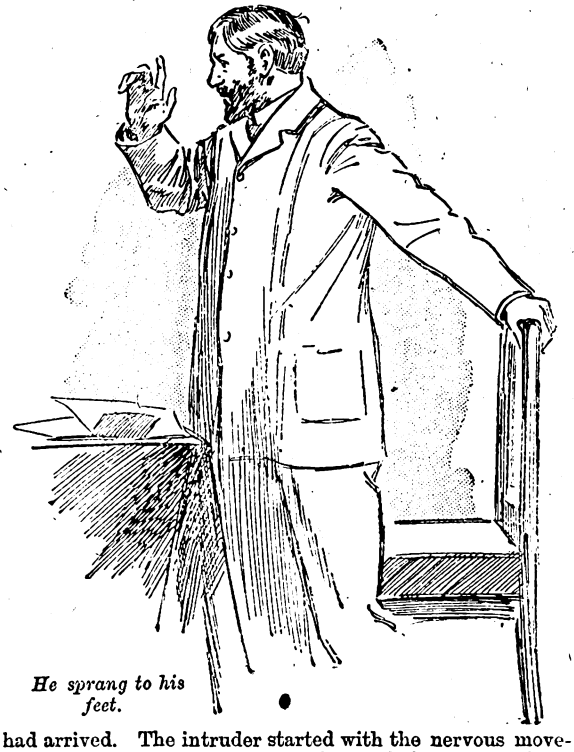
Noiselessly he opened his own door and stepped into the corridor. From the light shining through the space between the door and the floor he concluded that the intruder was availing himself of the benefit of gaslight.

Gently seizing the door-knob Burton tried it. As he suspected, it was not locked. Then he opened the door so quickly that it gave not the slightest sound.

Standing with his back towards the entrance was a man, carefully examining some papers that he had taken from the portmanteau on the floor, and which had been opened by means of one of his false keys.

"Ahem!"

Burton cleared his throat as an announcement that he had arrived. The intruder started with the nervous movement natural to a person when detected doing something wrong. He wheeled about and confronted the visitor, who instantly demonstrated that he was master of the situation. Extended at arm's length Burton held his revolver at a dead level with the muzzle aimed straight at the other's face.



He sprang to his feet.

"The first movement, and I fire!"

The words were spoken in a perfectly distinct, though low tone, while it was easy to judge from the gleam in Burton's eye that the threat was by no means an idle one.

Standing thus, Burton reached behind him with his left hand and closed the door. The two were now alone in the room.

"Bobby Roberts, alias John O'Kane, you are my prisoner," said Jack Burton.

It was impossible for anyone to be caught more fairly than was the individual thus addressed. Anticipating nothing of the kind, the revolver which he always carried still reposed in Roberts' pocket. In his confusion he dropped the paper in his hand, and demanded sullenly:

"What d'you want?"

"Sit down."

"Why?"

"Sit down, I tell you."

He was near the window, and close enough to a chair to obey without shifting his position. He did as commanded, dropping into a seat almost in a state of collapse. Sitting thus, he still confronted the levelled weapon, which followed his movements so that the muzzle held relatively the same position as before.

"Now, Roberts, let's understand each other," continued Burton, in the same off-hand manner he had shown from the first. "You can see that I have the advantage of you. Do as you're told, and you'll be all right; try to escape, and I pull the trigger. You know what *that* means."

The villain was rapidly regaining his self-possession.

"That's all right enough, but what's the use of keeping that thing pointed like that? It might go off accidentally."

"I'm too used to it to have any accidents."

"But it isn't necessary. It makes me nervous."

"All right, we'll have a change then," said Burton, taking a step forward and sitting down, but doing so without removing his gaze from the face of the other.

At the same moment he lowered his hand so that it rested on his knee. The position was less constrained and could be kept up for a long time without tiring his arm. Nevertheless, the weapon was so placed that any movement on the part of the prisoner could be instantly anticipated.

"Do you know me, Roberts?" asked Burton, with a smile.

The other, who had been studying his face intently, flushed and uttered a savage imprecation.

"Ah, I see you do. So much the better. Now we understand each other."

"I don't see what you can do with a man who gets into a wrong room by mistake," remarked Roberts, with a weak attempt at facetiousness.

"Not much, it's true, and if that was all I wouldn't bother you; but you haven't forgotten those other little accounts I have to settle with you, eh, Volney."

"What are they to do with you? What proof have you that I had anything to do with them?"

"Enough to arrest you at once on the warrants I have in my pocket."

Evidently Roberts considered the game up at last, and knowing well the man with whom he had to deal, he simply said sullenly:

"Well, Cairns, you've got the best of me this time. What are you going to do?"

"That depends upon *you*."

This was an altogether surprising reply. Roberts accepted it as signifying that the other, like too many people, were capable of being bought. The chance was eagerly seized.

"Now you're talking sense. You'll find I'll act all square, old fellow. How much do you want?"

"What can you pay?"

"How does £300 strike you?"

"Come, you can afford more than that."

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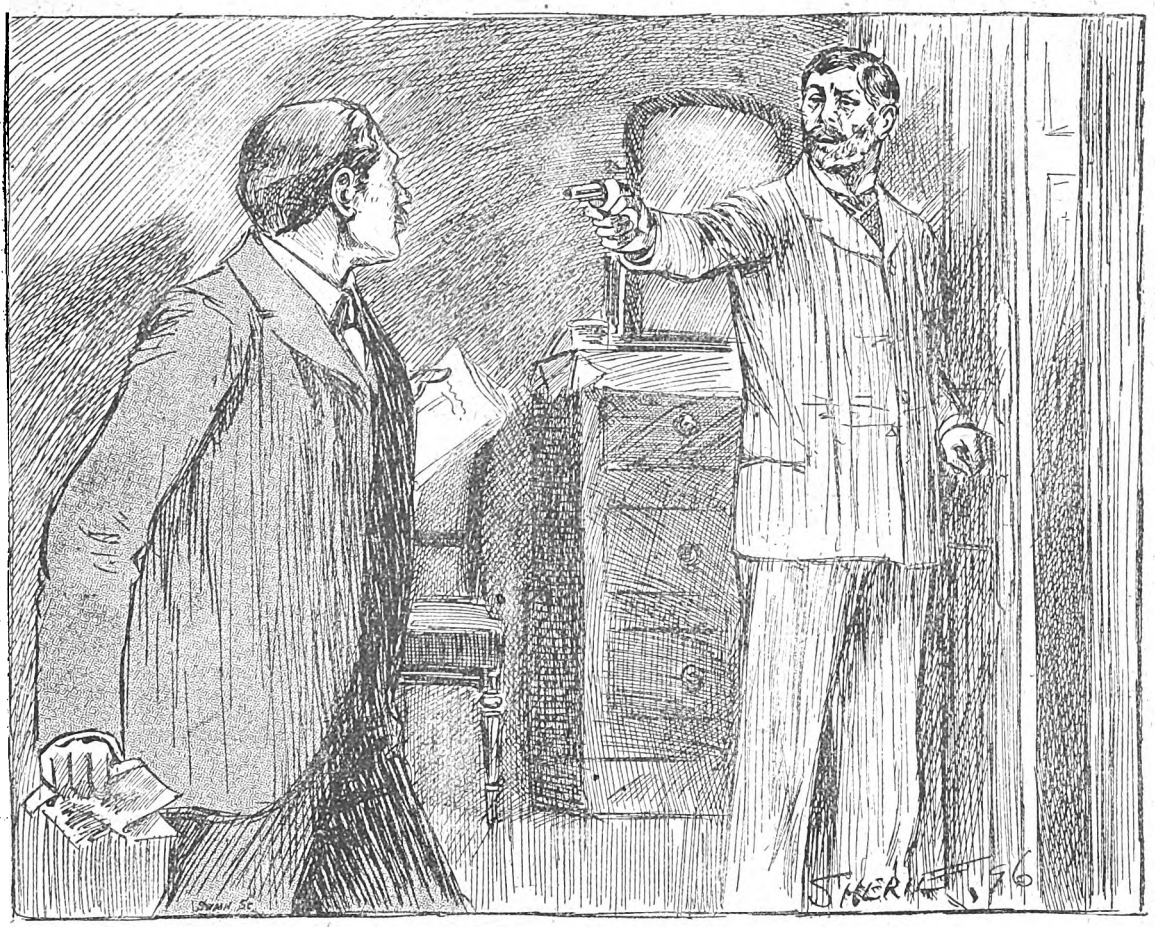

"The first movement, and I fire!"

"Don't be too rough on a poor orphan," said Roberts, who, seeing a prospect of release from an awkward dilemma, was disposed to be jocular; "you know I'm poor but honest."

"You wouldn't miss £500."

Roberts whistled softly, and opened his eyes.

"That's easily earned; but all right, it's a bargain, if you say so."

"I haven't said so," remarked Burton.

The couple had never once removed their eyes from each other's faces while talking. The remark of Burton awakened a sudden distrust on the part of his captive.

"It isn't fair to treat a fellow like that, Cairns; I would be square with you if our positions were different."

"Roberts," said the other, in the same low, business-like voice, which could hardly have been heard in the next room, "I wouldn't let you off for five, nor for ten, nor for one hundred thousand pounds. I have had plenty of such chances before to-night and haven't taken any of them yet."

"What did you mean, then, by saying what you did?" demanded the scowling ruffian, who would have given the sum named for the chance of twisting Burton's neck.

"I mean what I said. I won't compound a felony in the way you have in mind, but I will, for the first time in my life, do it, provided you pay me in another way."

"I don't understand you."

"Produce Alf Taylor alive and well, and you shall be free from any molestation from me for any and everything done previous to this night. We'll wipe it off the slate and begin anew to-morrow."

Eagerly Burton studied the miscreant's face while making him the offer. That it would be accepted he felt certain; but it was by no means certain that Roberts would be able to carry out his part of the agreement. He could lose nothing, and would have a chance of gaining everything, by making the required pledge.

The all-important question remained as to Roberts' ability to do anything of the nature required. It was not impossible that he knew nothing of the missing officer. Burton, however, believed that he did. At any rate, he was ready to act upon that supposition.

An indescribable expression passed over the villain's face.

"What makes you fancy I know anything of your friend Taylor?"

"I have only a suspicion; if you don't, why, the matter is ended, and I'll march you down to the lock-up to keep your three friends company."

"I haven't said I won't do as you ask, Cairns," was the significant remark of the prisoner.

"Understand, my proposition is that you produce Taylor well and unharmed—nothing less than *that* will answer."

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"I'll agree he shall be alive, but suppose you leave out the condition of being 'unharmed.'"

The significance of this remark sent a chill through Burton, for it clearly implied that the detective had suffered some injury. Indeed, Burton felt that he ought to have known that for the brave fellow would have been heard from before had he not been disabled through some attack.

"Well, say the injury is not fatal; that will answer."

"I can agree to that proposition, but you wouldn't expect me to bring him here?"

"No, you are to take me to him."

"If I do that, you swear that you'll let me start afresh from to-night."

"I give you my word, which I have never broken."

"Ahem! I don't think either of us have much to boast of in that line."

"So far as you are concerned you are correct. Will you take me to him to-night?"

"Yes; but, look here, I don't intend to walk downstairs at the point of that thing," pointing to the revolver.

"You needn't; I'll put it in my coat pocket, with my finger nice and handy on the trigger, so that if you try any tricks I can fire through the coat with certain aim."

"And what about the one I've got."

"You're welcome to it. Being my guest you will walk ahead. If you can use it any quicker than me you are welcome to do so. Now that's settled. By-the-way, there are just a few things I'd like to know."

"I'm listening."

"You were in this affair with Birch and the others?"

Roberts nodded his head silently.

"Well, so was I, and what I can't make out is where the dickins you got to. I knew you were in Middlewick, for I saw you in the street, but Nash and King were the only ones inside the bank, and Birch was the only other one of your friends near the bank. I ask again, what did you do in the affair?"

A sinister smile crossed Roberts' face as he replied meaningly:

"The bargain that you and I have just made is sufficient answer to that question."

"I guessed as much," said Burton, trying to conceal the shudder that passed over him.

An indescribable expression passed over the villain's face.

"You expected me to turn up, and I didn't; you expected Taylor to help you, and he didn't. Put two and two together, and there you have the four as plainly as anything."

Burton nodded his head. Nothing could be plainer than that.

"Rather lucky for me, too," added Roberts, "for they can't bring anything against me, so far at least as Middlewick's concerned."

"That's true enough, but you forget the documents in my possession render that unnecessary; I rely upon them."

"Ah, but you promised not to use them after to-night."

"*I* won't use them provided you perform your part of the contract. How long will it take us to get there to-night?"

Roberts hesitated a moment.

"I am not sure as to that, it depends."

"Half-an-hour; an hour; two hours?"

The prisoner grinned knowingly. He did not mean to give away the slight advantage he now possessed.

"Well, half-an-hour, perhaps. But you understand, I am trusting to your honour to leave me alone from the minute I've taken you to Taylor."

"Yes. If I find him alive and not mortally injured."

"All right. I'll take you to him——"

"*You needn't trouble yourself. Here I am.*"

It was the detective himself who uttered the last word as he strode into the room where the two men sat.

(To be continued.)

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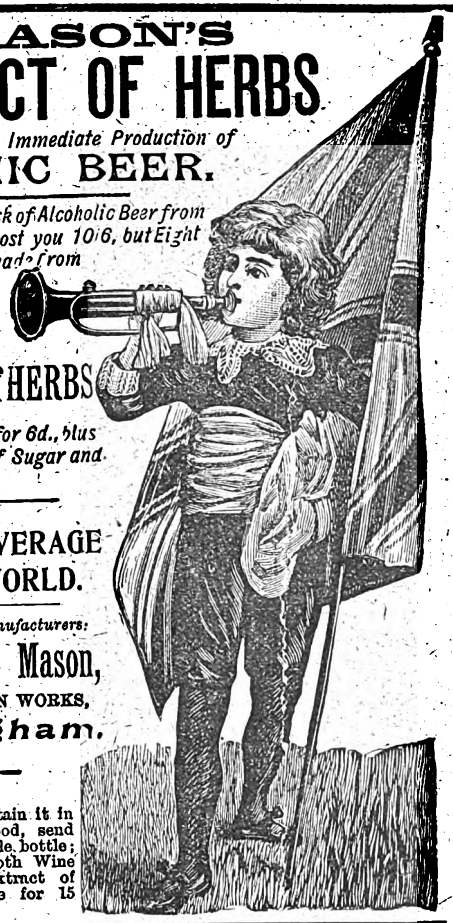

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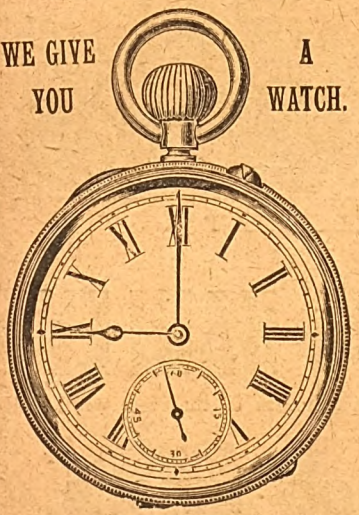

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 383. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 2ND, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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,, 5	10	6	,,	9	0	10 0	15 6
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,, 7	10	6	,,	10	6	12 0	18 6
,, 8	12	0	,,	10	6	13 6	20 6

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,, 11	12	0	,,	12	0	15 3	24 0
,, 12	13	6	,,	12	0	17 0	27 0
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SHORT STORIES

LOVE ADVENTURE ROMANCE WAR HUMOUR PATHOS

EDITED BY C ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 383.] For the Week ending May 2nd, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

A Tragedy of the Sahara.

Translated from the French of Maurice Montegut.

IN our times, France's great African colonies are subdued for ever; but in other days, during the attempts of a laborious conquest, every moment held a danger. Skirmishes were incessant, real combats were frequent, and each post of the extreme vanguard had its romantic episodes, to be related later. Here is one of them.

* * * * *

Soft and wavering the wind blew up off the scorched waste of sandy desert, the air freshened suddenly, and night fell. Like a barrier upon the horizon the ascending hills gradually took on tints of lilac; to the right and to the left stretched the plain of reddish sand, traversed irregularly by ravines of less or greater darkness, according to their depth, and by strange palm-groves, yellow, dusty, sunburnt. Twilight is unknown in Africa; darkness falls there with a push, like a curtain, and this swiftness of change of setting is accentuated correspondingly as the dry country is reached, in the heart of the desert, in the unexplored lands. Here, past the High Plains, beyond Saida, Ain-Seffra, almost into Morocco, on the borders of the mysterious Fighig, at the farthest point whither the exploring columns have penetrated, this natural phenomenon is profoundly noticeable; the shades invade the earth in the briefest moment, and change and darken it with their clouds as ink darkens water.

A bugle sounded within the circle of tents; the horses of the picket lifted their heads, and the *chasseurs*, in their wide blouses and trousers of linen, went to form in line slowly for the evening roll-call. The bugle, loud and shrill, was echoed again and again, carried by the sonorous swells to the foot of the tranquil mountains, where the sound died out. The squadron was formed on the right. Cabarousse, captain, commanding, and his two lieutenants, Peyralte and Vaudras, all drowsy, regarded the manœuvre carelessly, without uttering a word, with their arms drooping, and all about, far, near above, everywhere, there reigned a silence so great that it seemed religious, sacred, full of august mysteries.

The roll-call was begun. After each name followed the brief, monotonous answers, as each day at that hour, with the apathetic indifference of mechanical exertion. The adjutant did not even pause before passing from one name to another.

"Present!—esent!—sent!"

"Hanrion?"

No one answered. The adjutant, surprised, lifted his gaze from his roll-book, and repeated:

"Hanrion?"

No answer.

"Well! are you deaf, you Hanrion?"

No answer.

A soldier was missing. His companions of the ranks spread their hands and gesticulated in token that they knew nothing, comprehended nothing. Cabarousse came forward.

"Let us see. Who was the last man to see Hanrion? Where was it? When was it? Speak up now?"

In the morning, at roll-call; none had seen him since.

"Finish the roll-call! Break—ranks!"

So there was a soldier missing. In the neighbourhood of a city, Cabarousse would have shrugged his shoulders, saying simply: "A hair thrown to the winds!" but here in this complete solitude, twenty leagues from the last advanced post, an absent man might as well be counted dead at once. And in a squadron alone there, isolated, lost, and entirely dependent upon itself, a call without response was enough to chill the boldest. In the desert, ranks are inevitably narrowed, and individualities are allied; no one is unknown, all are comrades, and one of these comrades had disappeared.

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In every group, whether the sleeves were blank or braided, that disappearance was discussed passionately, with the instinctive horror of the thought: "If it were I!" For human selfishness is never lost completely; all solidarity rests on personal considerations.

The country here was not, however, openly dangerous, not avowedly hostile; the bands of nomad Arabs had been repulsed, driven back to the mountains, and only a Kabyle village had its huts a short distance away. But the Kabyles are sedentary, of lazy habits, and they regard with indifference the foreign troops defiling past them in clouds of golden dust, and strike not, unless they are attacked in their own dwellings, under their roofs of mud and stone.

And yet, nevertheless, Cabarousse, suspicious, twisting his moustache, looked obstinately to that side where lay the Kabyle village. There, he was convinced, lay the solution of the mystery. Suddenly he strode towards the group of soldiers.

"Here, let us see about this! no more trifling! Does anyone know anything?—there must be a woman in this business—a Kabyle woman, eh? Answer—one or another, or all at once! But answer, or else——"

"A woman—or more than one! it is the same thing," let slip a soldier, shaking his head knowingly.

"Here, you! come forward and tell what you know."

The soldier advanced and spoke out, finally. He was a barrack's gossip, a swaggerer, and he spoke after his kind. "Well, this is about it, my captain; one is not made of wood, you see, and the desert is wide, and six months is a long time. It is very hard—not to see a woman for that long." Then he went on to say that the Kabyle girls were wont to go to wash their bright-coloured rags at a rill at no great distance from the camp, and "the devil! one gets a twist in both eyes when one sees their brown, round ankles, as they go down to the gully. But that is all! as to their heads, they are so togged out that one sees only their eyes. But such eyes! That scamp Hanrion liked to go to watch them wash—a fancy like any other. He declared that the tallest and the shortest of them winked at him sidewise as they passed him; and that always pleases a man, wherever he may be, my captain——"

"That is enough!" cried Cabarousse, and he gave the order to saddle the horses.

Thirty men were left in charge of the tents. The others were galloping in the bright moonlight, and by the clear rays horses and riders projected gigantic shadows, scattered by the haste of march, but equal in dimensions, the lines being maintained strictly. The thirst for battle and the joy of vengeance impelled the squadron; besides, any excitement is welcome which comes to break the monotony of long days of idleness. Then forward! Uprose and fled from the road the marauding jackals whose shrill squeals insult from afar their natural enemy, man, once he is safely past them. Now and then a sabre sounded against a stirrup, or a horse which left his place was by force of hand returned thither; but always the troop continued advancing with spectral aspect, forming an ever-retreating picture.

The soldiers were content with the expedition perceiving that the death of one among them was not to be passed over indifferently, and that all bloody memories would find prompt vengeance. Little by little, a sparse vegetation spread beneath the feet of the horses; then the way was streaked by the silhouettes of palm trees; farther yet, and the Kabyle village stood confusedly out from the earth, with its mud-hovels, low, narrow-windowed, whose doors were too small for human stature; and round about the inclosures for cattle, now vacant.

At a brief word of command, the squadron halted. No light shone, all was dark; no one moved, nor anything whatever. Only a few vagabond dogs, scenting the strangers, barked. The troop surrounded, at a walk, the village, still silent, still dark. Dismount! They entered the first hut, and it was vacant; the inhabitants had fled, taking their effects and weapons. This was their guilty confession. More than that all farther search was now useless and without purpose.

But what was that? Lying across a doorway, with its face in a heap of filth, was the body of a man, with its throat cut, its face bathed in blood. It was Hanrion. Then, on the vast night, arose a clamour of rage, which presently sinks into grief—a tone of unspeakable sadness, of supreme pity. Afar stretch the undulating plains; and the imperturbable chain of hills, black now, seemed insolently to bar the way to reprisals.

Stiff upon his horse, gloomy and forbidding in the clear night, Cabarousse shook his clenched hand at the invisible, as one who dreams of vengeance.

"Lieutenant!" he cried at last, "take fifty men and crush that brood of maggots until not two are left living! Oh, that I must stay at my post! that I might go with you!"

When the ranks were formed, the sub-lieutenant, Philippe Vaudras, saluted and started with his fifty men towards the Unknown, before them, while Cabarousse and his squad returned at a foot-pace, in their own despite, to the camp, with heads bent, with hearts saddened, bearing, laid across two horses, the bloodstained body of the murdered Hanrion.

Tall, slender, a leonine blonde, with clear blue eyes, when he left the military school, Philippe Vaudras had chosen Africa as a field for adventure, and, in a year of camp-life, he had made himself noted for his bravery, and this in a wild squadron where every man was valiant. Because of his white hands, his sweet voice, and his youth, the soldiers called him "Lady Sub-Lieutenant;" but, when he charged across the plain, that "little one" gladdened the heart; his horse had splendid legs, and was always first in the combat; and—what a powerful fist had "my lady sub-lieutenant!" His soldiers were fain to follow Vaudras, since they could never get before him; and they followed him with enthusiasm, drunken with his wildness, and, above all, so that nothing of ill should befal him. He seemed precisely the chief necessary for that romantic expedition, for that tragic, for that setting extraordinarily tragic; after him, his troop would follow blindly.

At the head of the van-guard and on the flanks of the squads, the guides, the explorers, the pathfinders, bent over their pommels, with their gaze fixed on the ground, directing their course by tracks almost invisible by the pale light. Across a width of forty yards, there appeared in the sand deep marks, footprints of men and beasts, whose wide spaces attested the tumultuous flight, the disorder of defeat, beneath the furious lashes of the Kabyle drivers, terrified by that corpse they left behind them.

The horses of the pursuers were panting. "Halt!" commanded Vaudras. The *chasseurs* camped as well as they could; they lay down to sleep with an arm through the bridle, and, in spite of the jerks and pulls of the animals, their sleep was deep and dreamless. At last, a faint white streak appeared on the horizon; dawn was breaking; and suddenly a growing light dispelled the shadows and discovered distant objects. Then, on the

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flank of the hills, appeared the tribe they were pursuing, a long, grey line of men, women, and children, of sheep and oxen, climbing the heights in haste, and the air conveyed to them, like a call, the lowing of the oxen and the bleating of the sheep.

With one simultaneous shout, the riders spurred to a gallop; but if they saw, they were seen also; and the Kabyles, abandoning already the heaviest of their luggage, ran up the steeps in a revolt of confusion. They were lost to sight in the chaos of gigantic boulders; one by one, as ants bury themselves in the earth, they were hidden to the last one in the hollows of the mountains. All that remained in sight were a few oxen, uneasy, turning towards the plain, lowing sadly, with necks stretched, muzzles thrust out, and nostrils flaring.

An hour later, Vaudras and his troopers found themselves all at once within a hundred yards of the enemy, having arrived thither by means of literal goat-paths. The Kabyles had made front and were awaiting them. The situation explained their audacity. Between the fugitive tribe and the blue and red *chasseurs*, the only path open was an extremely narrow pass which joined two level spaces; this pass ran along the side of the mountain like a forbidding balcony, hung over a gorge of immense depth.

It was not wide enough for two horsemen abreast, and that beneath the unerring fire of the Kabyles on the heights. The least slip, the first false step, would send one rolling into infinite space. Vaudras saw this conformation, and, understanding its horror, his face blanched, and he shut his eyes. The troopers paused in astonishment, and the smoking horses panted heavily, and receded, necks thrust over cruppers. Evidently the Kabyles had known of that natural redoubt; the women and children were hidden behind the rocks in the rear, and the men were on their knees, or on their breasts, sheltered from balls by great blocks of granite. They held the mountain, and could fire at their pleasure upon the soldiers in the open. Moreover, there was the ravine, the threatening fall.

The French soldiers thrust their heads forward to gaze at the abyss, saying by their grimaces: "If we were birds, now——"

Suddenly the bugler, a little scamp of twenty years old at the utmost, spurred his horse forward in bravado, and sounded the charge. The signal was given, the horses started of their own accord, and along the whole extent of the menacing pass, head flush with tails before them, the first squad dashed splendidly, under a furious fusillade. Only one man, restraining his horse with both hands—only one man, rigid as if petrified in his saddle, remained behind it as rear-guard.

It was Vaudras.

One, two, four, five, twenty; the troopers thundered past him, shaking their heads under that hurricane of balls, but laughing and encouraging one another with shouts. The sub-lieutenant remained immovable, with his eyes fixed on the summit, a cold sweat running off his temples.

Vaudras was smitten with vertigo.

To be attacked by vertigo is almost as bad as to go mad outright. The horror of it suffocates and paralyses; and the man predisposed by temperament to that mysterious potency of empty space, to that magnetic attraction from abysses, loses all consciousness of himself and all will power; he pales, he trembles, he recedes, and flies from the mute summons of the invisible death awaiting him in the air.

Vaudras was afraid.

Ah! the battle! there is the powder which laughs, the lead which whistles, the steel which darts, the blood which flows, the splendid shocks, the noisy death at will! But that great mouth, silent, terrific, waiting to suck one in—no!—no!—no! impossible! never!

Thirty men had passed, had taken the lead of Vaudras, They fancied that their officer, for the best of reasons, doubtless, watched their tragic defile, and would follow, to place himself at their head again. None noted his appearance, none suspected his anguish. The "little one" afraid! Bah! "Mademoiselle" Vaudras nervous! Indeed, that is enough to terrify. What is the matter? "My lady sub-lieutenant is crying!"

Forty men had gone forward; the balls whistled harshly, scratching the granite walls with terrible rebounds. The Kabyles were firing volleys, continual discharges, sure that they were lost if the charging foes should reach them. Vaudras was exposing himself as a target uselessly.

All the fifty men had passed by him. He remained alone. He dismounted, meaning to try the pass on foot; his horse broke from him, and hurled itself after the others; at a quarter the length of the trail, its shoes slipped on the rock, it lost its footing, and was whirled into the abyss, its four hoofs turned upward. Vaudras screamed, his eyes starting from their sockets. He threw himself upon his knees, he dragged himself upon his stomach, but brute instinct drew him backwards. He *could not* go on.

At that moment, he saw his men surrounded on all sides by the Kabyles, three times their number, rendered desperate by their danger. The women and children sallied from their rock-crannies, and hung themselves from the bridles, they plunged knives into the bellies of the horses, they scratched, they bit, they threw stones.

In that swarming of the horde, that entanglement, that furious grasp of the raving multitude, the *chasseurs*, suffocated, dragged down, felt their limbs grow numb. Their bleeding bodies were drenching the earth with red, and their leader was not there to inspire them, to ordain a victory!

It was faring ill with them. Their long sabres, dulled and bent, were withdrawn with difficulty from their thrusts into the masses. Their arms were weak and broken. They were powder-burned—at such close range were the Kabyles firing. They were deafened by the shrieks of the children, by the howls of the women, by the roars of the men; cut, bitten, bleeding, scorched on all sides, the little troop melted slowly before the multitude which assailed unceasingly. Sally, ambuscade, be the attack of what ilk it might, it meant defeat and death to the French cavalrymen.

Vaudras once more started to run forward, and with his mouth foaming, he fell back once more—the last time. From afar, he gazed with an infinite tenderness upon his men, dying there without him—but, ah! in dying, they were fighting bravely—slaying gallantly. He drew his pistol from his belt, he held it against his temple, he pressed the trigger, and the last convulsions of the death-agony precipitated his corpse into that bottomless abyss which had brought upon him the accursed vertigo.

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Stazzemsko the Moujik.

It is morning. The little moujik Stazzemsko arises, very drowsy yet. The pigeons, cooing, brush their wings lightly against the roof of yellow straw. The horses snort impatiently over their mangers. The moujik pulls on a pair of trousers of Lesghis cloth, wraps his feet with the onoutchi, four bands of red wool folded crosswise, and, to complete his costume, puts on the schouba, the comfortable schouba, very long and very warm, which cost two roubles and a year's harvesting of honey.

Keivkine, his wife before God, sleeps stretched out upon the great tiled stove. He playfully touches her nose, then each cheek, and finally wakens her and says: "I am going to the city to your father's house to get what you have asked of me—two jars filled with mares' milk, and a flute one tone higher than cousin Serkow's, and a fat sheep for you to roast at Easter."

And the little moujik, after the manner of a fond husband, begins teasing his wife. He pats her gently on the forehead, on the cheek, then on the neck and pretty shoulders. "I am going to take our little one, Popow, with me," he says. "The air is cool and bracing, the journey will be good for him. I will take up little Popow, it will wake him up!" And the moujik laughed merrily.

A worthy man is the moujik, a shoemaker by trade. He goes regularly to church, swears not, never omits the sign of the cross in passing a funeral. He gives thanks at night for the day's blessings, and his faithful soul knows well that although he feeds his horse, and puts on its harness, it is the Lord who leads it.

He now awakens his son. Popow rubs his eyes with his chubby fist, and cries a little before knowing what is wanted of him. The moujik, assuming a gruff tone, says:

"I am going to the city to get some mares' milk, a flute, and a sheep. Who wants to go with me?"

"I," cried Popow.

Then the father takes up the child, places him astride his shoulders, and descends to the stable. There he yokes up his carriage, a well-made vehicle with fine axle-trees, high wheels, and traces of leather, to which the horses are buckled.

And now the day breaks, a fresh, lilac-coloured dawn spreading afar over the land.

Both Stazzemsko and little Popow are seated comfortably in the carriage, well covered up, and the moujik grasps the reins, calling back to the baba: "I will bring you the milk, the sheep, and the flute to-night."

They are off. The baba watches them anxiously as they disappear. "If only the snow did not catch them on the way—if only Popow be not cold—if only the horses be swift!"

Silent, she turns back to the house, burns a taper before a sacred picture, kneels, and sings these verses:

"God will protect those who live in fear of Him. The spirit of the Lord is a divine lamp which reveals all that is false in the heart of man. It is for us to prepare our soul, for Him to govern our tongue. Let us observe the law."

Father and son meanwhile are riding through fields, plains and valleys, and Popow is questioning the moujik. He is eight years old. He is wise.

"Papa, what is mares' milk for?"

"For the baba if she should be sick."

"Papa, what is the sheep for?"

"For the festival of Easter; the family must eat."

"Papa, what is the flute for?"

"To make the bees swarm; they are like simple-minded people—they listen to music."

Popow was satisfied. He is of a curious and thoughtful turn of mind. Beneath that shock of golden hair flying in the wind are grave thoughts, and these grave thoughts must be happy ones, since they make the child smile.

"I will drink some mares' milk; I will suck the fat from the bones of the sheep; I will play on the flute."

But the moujik urges on his black horses: "Up, my little father! On, my little dove!"

And the two black horses seem to fly over the ground. They leave behind them the roads, the ditches, the hills, the brooks, the high hedges of trees. And, behold, the great steppe spreads out before them—like a sea.

The pace becomes more rapid, but steadier. Nothing, neither ruts nor stones, will now impede the smooth movements of the wheels. The lilac-hued dawn rises higher, the sun appears, and Popow claps his hands, shouting: "Good! 'tis day!"

To amuse the child the moujik softly sings the Pliassoväia, a song of exile and poverty, a popular satire:

"From the north pole to the south pole, no place for us, no place!
The police are ever vigilant.
The hangman has a green eye.
Ai, ai, Tra-ra-rai, ai.
Virgin! but his eye is green!"

"Who are you singing against?" asks Popow amazed.

"Against the lords, the masters of the soil."

"The soil?"

"Yes, the land."

Popow does not understand. He asks absently:

"It has masters, the land?"

But the moujik whips up his horses and cries furiously: "Kss! kss! little demons!"

And turning towards his son:

"The poor do not plead, the rich reply harshly."

"And we, papa, are we rich or poor?"

"Half-way between the two," answers the moujik simply.

* * * * *

It is noon. They arrive at the great city. The father-in-law is pleased. He makes them drink a bowl of tea, offers them cake and game, and gives the moujik a Daghestan pipe, and Popow a porcelain figure of a Cossack thrusting out his tongue. He inquires how shoes are selling, if the supply of honey is good, if the baba is well.

"The baba is not only well, but doubly well."

And Popow does not understand why the two men whisper to each other laughing.

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Finally the moujik says:

"I have come for two jars of mares' milk."

"Here they are."

"Also a fat sheep."

"I sold the last this morning."

"And also a flute."

"I have three of them; take your choice."

The moujik tries the three flutes, takes the one which makes the loudest sound. Then together they walk out into the broad streets. They look at the pretty women reclining on the cushions of their carriages, the fine shops, the people who are speaking French in the street, and when they have gazed at all these things, the moujik finally says, in a decided tone: "It is time to go."

"Well, son-in-law, God be with you."

Father and son are again traversing the fields, plains, valleys, and Popow is still asking questions as in the morning.

"Papa, you have the flute?"

"Yes."

"Do the bees like music?"

"As simple-minded people do," answered Stazzemsko, and he shook the reins.

"Go on, my little father! Go on, my little dove!"

And the two black horses seem to fly over the ground. The pace becomes more rapid.

Eventide in hyacinthine hues spreads over the land, the moon appears, and Popow claps his hands shouting: "Good! 'tis night!"

The moujik softly sings the Pliassoväia:

"From the north pole to the south pole, no place for us, no place!"

"It is beautiful, the darkness!" cries Popow, delighted at the sensation of moving swiftly through the shadows.

And now they had been galloping for two hours. The horned moon is bright. The sweat of the horses rises in vapour about them, glinting in the white light. On they gallop, on and on! Their eight hoofs make but a single flash.

"Kss! kss! little paschal lamb! Kss! kss! dove of my roof!" cries the moujik to his horses.

But now, just below, by the wheel, two white points light near him, and these points of fire follow him, bounding along. The moujik Stazzemsko shudders. But he is braver than a Pandour, stronger than a cannoneer. He lashes the right eye of the wolf with his whip, whereupon the wolf leaves the right side, and bounds to the left. But while the moujik lashes him with his whip, other white points light up at his right side, and, lo! now two wolves are following the carriage. They jump, they fix their eyes on the moujik in silence. Stazzemsko is afraid. He looks out upon the boundless steppe filled with shadows, and as he lowers his eyes he sees not four but thirty points of light gleaming about him.

"Ho! ho! ho! little dove! little father! faster! faster!"

And the excited horses raise higher their iron shoes, stretch their necks forward, panting for breath. So swift is their reaching gallop that they appear longer by half.

"Ho! ho! ho! rai! ra! rai!" screams Stazzemsko.

The moujik rises to his feet, holding the reins taut, his cap on the back of his head, his round eyes staring straight into the night. It is no longer a pack, but a multitude which follows him. He hears their panting, their claws scratching the hard earth.

"Ho! rai! rai! little dove! little father, hie along!"

And the carriage flies, a swiftly moving shadow in the night.

Stazzemsko stands erect like the Tamschtschik, the weird postillion with eyes of flame. He is seized with horror. The wolves seem about to spring upon him, to fasten themselves to his cloak, to bury their fangs in his arms, to leap upon the horses, to cut the reins with their sharp teeth, to tear his son in pieces. And Popow laughs, unconscious of the danger. Now and then he blows in the flute, his eyes turned towards the stars.

"Haou! ho! rai! rai! ho! hou!"

Poor Stazzemsko! He thinks of the baba, the pretty fair-headed baba, who is waiting for them by the stove or before the beehive, of the soup of pearl barley which is steaming upon the dresser, and of the tale he will tell of his journey. But now wolves, wolves, and more wolves, gathering silently, eager for one of the horses to fall. The sharp wind cuts the moujik's face, and pierces to the marrow of his bones.

"Clic! clac!—Hou! ho! rai! rai! ho! hou! clic! clac!"

A wolf has leaped upon the seat, has bitten the moujik's shoe. He utters a sharp cry, seizes the animal by the nostrils, hurls him back, but a spasm of fear pierces Stazzemsko like a sharp pain. He leaps upon the back of one of the horses, and cries in the ears of the faithful beasts: "Faster, lamb! faster, dove! for Popow's sake."

"By the Christ!" suddenly screams Stazzemsko.

A wolf is clinging to the seat. Stazzemsko now springs quickly back into the carriage. He lifts the tilt and looks behind him.

They are a score, three-score, seven-score, ten-score wolves. It is a black ocean swarming with stars, as if the canopy of hell were reflected in the steppe!

And still the moujik's cry: "Ho! rai! rai! ra! rai! ho!"

But he has lost all hope, he is gasping for breath! Popow has let the flute fall, the good flute which the bees love.

"Popow! Popow!" suddenly screams the moujik, with the gestures and cries of a madman.

"What, papa?" murmurs the child.

"Popow! Popow!" sobs the father.

"O, papa! what did you say?"

"Popow! Popow! you see the wolves?"

"Yes, papa, yes!"

"They are going to kill us!"

"No, papa, if the bees like the music, the wolves——"

But these are his last words! Suddenly the moujik seizes his child by the throat, lifts him on high, and with an awful blasphemy hurls the child into the midst of the wolves!

A strangled cry. The dark moving pack stops—stops for a moment. The carriage glides swiftly on.

Now it has passed the steppe. The horses slacken their pace. They enter the darkened, sleeping village but the baba, the pretty blonde baba, waits by the gate.

"Well, Stazz, dear Stazz, hast thou had a peaceful journey? Was Popow cold? Did the horses go well?"

But the moujik answers not.

He plays upon the flute, laughing long and loud, a strange shuddering laugh, for his mind is dead to all things.

M. M.

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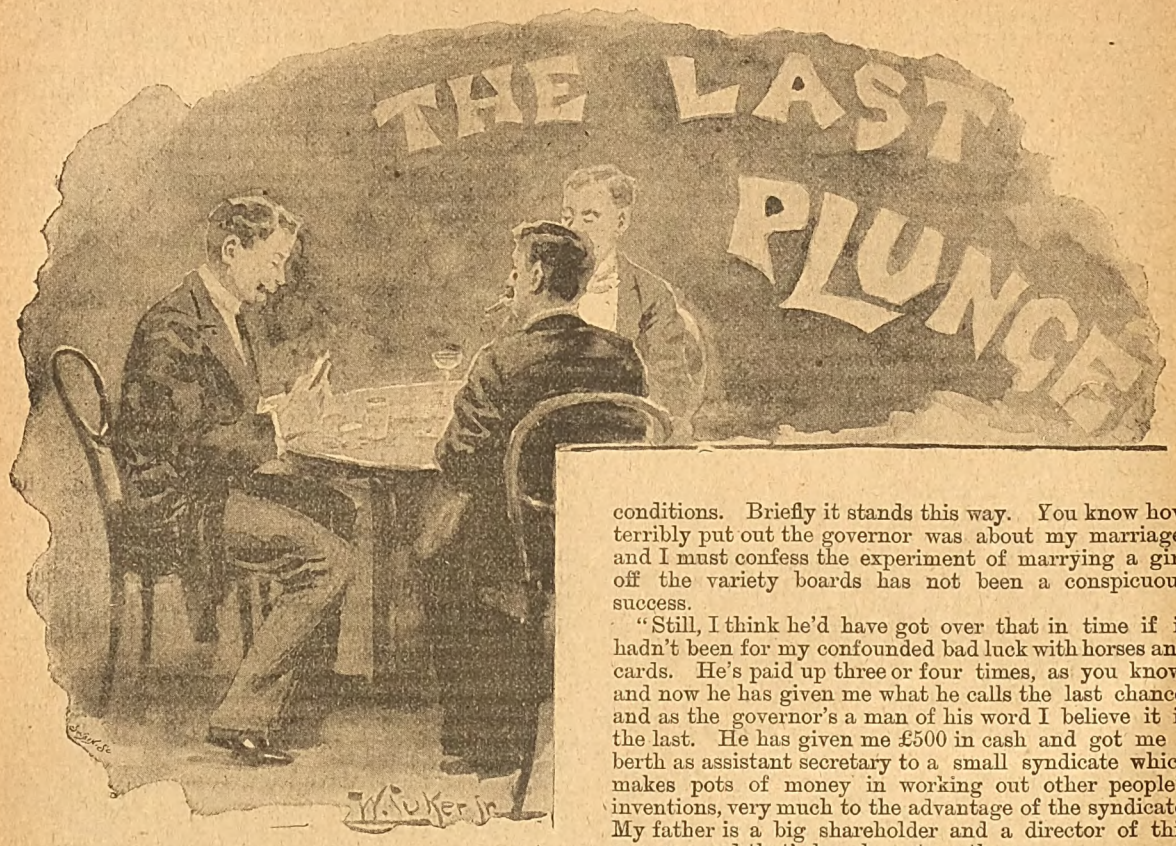

"My dear fellow, I tell you it's an absolute certainty. The mare is as bound to win as water's bound to run down hill. There's nothing else in it with her; it's a dead snip, and I've backed my opinion by putting every sovereign I can raise on it. If you are wise, you'll do the same."

"Yes, it's a very good thing I've no doubt, but for all that it's a terrible risk, you know. I don't mean that it isn't good enough as a bet, for I believe myself that May Queen will have a walk over, but then you must remember that I should be risking a lot more than what I staked."

"What do you mean? I don't see how you can lose more than you put on."

"But I should lose a great deal more than that, I can assure you. Of course this is strictly between ourselves, and so I don't mind telling you that the old gentleman has rehabilitated me and set me once more, and for the last time, in the pathways of respectability, but upon very stringent conditions."

Frank Yorke, *roué*, clubman, man-about-town, living one-fourth on a private income of five hundred a year and three-fourths on his wits, looked at his friend, Percy Savil, a rather weak-faced man nearly ten years his junior, with a sarcastic pretence of approbation, as he replied:

"I'm delighted to hear it, and I hope I may congratulate you upon having reformed for a very substantial consideration."

Savil laughed, not altogether pleasantly, and said:

"Not very substantial and not very pleasant as to conditions. Briefly it stands this way. You know how terribly put out the governor was about my marriage, and I must confess the experiment of marrying a girl off the variety boards has not been a conspicuous success.

"Still, I think he'd have got over that in time if it hadn't been for my confounded bad luck with horses and cards. He's paid up three or four times, as you know, and now he has given me what he calls the last chance, and as the governor's a man of his word I believe it is the last. He has given me £500 in cash and got me a berth as assistant secretary to a small syndicate which makes pots of money in working out other people's inventions, very much to the advantage of the syndicate. My father is a big shareholder and a director of this concern, and that's how he got me there.

"I'm to have five hundred a year and I shall have to earn it. If I stick to work and go steadily everything else is to be forgotten and when the old gentleman dies I shall come in for the Berkshire estate and about seven thousand a year, just as if I had been the best of only sons.

"But, if he finds that I have made a single bet, or put a single sovereign on a horse, or in any way indulged what he calls my pernicious craze for gambling, I shall get the sack from the syndicate, and be disinherited into the bargain. Now do see how much I should lose supposing I put money that I don't possess on May Queen and she didn't win?"

"But you told me just now that the governor had given you five hundred in cash. Haven't you any of it left?"

"Precious little. It was all owed before I got it. There was that hundred to D'Arcy, a couple of hundred to those Jew lawyers who run the Metropolitan Bank as a money-lending concern at sixty per cent., and the other two hundred just about sufficed to keep the most noisy of my creditors quiet for a bit."

"H'm, that's a pity! If you only had that five hundred now and could put it on May Queen at six to one it would be as good as three thousand in your pocket, and three thousand is not to be sneezed at, you know, by a man with your tastes who has to live on five hundred a year, and earn it. If it wasn't such an absolute certainty I wouldn't for a moment advise you to take the plunge under the circumstances, but I know how unfortunate you've been, and the information that

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I have had is so exclusive and so perfectly reliable that I thought it was only friendly to pass it on to you."

"Yes," replied Savil, as the voice of the tempter sank into his weak, undisciplined soul. "It's very kind of you, old man, and that three thousand would be the salvation of me, for the moment that it gets known that I'm drawing a regular income the duns would be down on me like a flock of vultures and I shall have either to reduce myself to the wages of a clerk to pay them off, or I shall be worried to death with judgments, and similar inventions of the law and the evil one. I daren't tell the governor about all of them for reasons that you will appreciate after what I have told you."

Yorke smiled and nodded, and he went on, staring blankly out of the club room in which they were sitting.

"Still I must confess that it's a great temptation. Three thousand would more than clear the lot off and then I could start square. I suppose there is no way of doing it so that even if she lost my name wouldn't appear in the business. Could you put it on for me in your name?"

"I would with the greatest pleasure, old man, but my book's full on Ascot, and between you and me the bookies know that I've got on all I can lose, and if I went for another five hundred they'd want me to put the money down, and that's not what you want. But as your father has settled up for you, and as you've got a decent appointment, I'm sure Dobson would take the bet from you if you could put down ten per cent. I suppose you could get that together?"

"Oh, yes, I could manage that," replied Savil. "You're right, it is too good a thing to throw away; I'll risk it."

"Bravo!" said Yorke. "That's like your old pluck. I like to see a man stand up to his misfortunes, and you can feel perfectly safe—May Queen is as certain to win the Ascot Cup as the sun is to rise to-morrow morning, so we may as well go and split a bottle to her success and your better fortunes."

There are some men who cannot go straight, and Percy Savil, only son of Sir Percy Savil, Baronet, of Trenton Abbey in Berkshire, and director of the Patents' Operating Syndicate, Coleman Street, E.C., was one of them. He had had every chance that his father could give him, and he had made a mess of them all.

Finally he had married a pretty, rather vulgar girl, perfectly respectable, and off the boards equally insipid, and this had led to the old gentleman first sending him out of the house and then cutting him off with less than a shilling, which he could do permanently if he chose, as the estate was not entailed, and his fortune was absolutely at his own disposal.

As has been seen, he had relented to a certain extent, as fathers are wont to do, but this was really the last chance that Percy would ever have, and he did with it as he had done with the rest. He was a gambler, heart and soul, and for such there is no hope.

Still if he could have had any idea of the depths to which this last act of wickedness and folly was to take him, short of money as he was, he would have thrown the fifty pounds into the Thames and consented to live on the barest pittance till his father's death rather than have paid the ten per cent. deposit to the bookmaker Dobson as he did on the day following the evening of his conversation with Yorke.

Frank Yorke's confidence in the May Queen was so far justified that a week before the race the odds had decreased from four to one to seven to four. With a last inspiration of good, Savil tried to hedge and save himself. But the Fates were against him. He had no money to deposit and he could find no one who would take the bet on credit. The day of the race came, he won about a hundred pounds through Yorke on one or two minor races, and May Queen was beaten for the Cup by half a head.

The race was run on Tuesday. On the following Monday he would have to pay £450 or he would be posted at Tattersall's and nothing could prevent his father finding out that he had broken the compact, and this would mean immediate ruin and future disinheritance. In the ordinary course of events he had about as much chance of paying the £450 as he had of materially reducing the National Debt. His credit among his own associates was gone, he dare not go to his father, the Jews would have laughed at him, and there was an end of it.

To say that he looked upon his position as desperate would be to describe his state of mind very inadequately. He was something more than desperate. He was in that state of mind in which a man is not only reckless as regards himself but completely careless as to any consequences that he may bring upon other people. It is a curious fact that when people are in this condition they usually have opportunities for making bad worse, and so it turned out with Percy Savil.

He got through his work at the office of the Syndicate in some sort of fashion the day after the race, and that evening he met Yorke by appointment and went to have, as he called it, a final flutter before the smash came. He had somewhere about a hundred pounds with him and the two went to a snug little private club, of which they were both members, not a mile from the centre of Piccadilly Circus, where unlawful games of chance were the rule and stakes were limited only by the purse or the discretion of the players.

"I expect a fellow to call at the club to-night," said Yorke as soon as they were seated in a hansom, "who ought to be a fit and proper person to give you your revenge against the Fates. He is a young American named, absurdly enough, Nasmyth P. Vansyller, but young and apparently simple, and absolutely wallowing in dollars. He had also a taste for poker, a game which you ought to know pretty well by this time, and I think instead of plunging with the other fellows at baccarat or roulette we had better arrange a quite little poker party in the small drawing-room, and get Mr. Vansyller to join us."

"All right," said Savil with the carelessness of a man who knows that he has only one more card to play. "That will suit me better than the other. I don't much care about absolute, blind chance for my last fling; I've had quite enough of it, but at poker, I think I ought to be able to relieve Mr. Vansyller of some of his dollars before morning."

So he did, but not at all in the manner he had in his mind when he spoke.

Mr. Vansyller, a young man of about four-and-twenty and apparently a representative specimen of the American parody on the English gilded youth, arrived at the club, sent up his card to Yorke, and was duly introduced, and made free of the premises for the evening.

The poker party was a great success, for Mr. Frank Yorke and Mr. Nasmyth P. Vansyller. Percy Savil, by dint of good nerve and better fortune, multiplied his hundred by five within the first two hours of the

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game. If he had stopped then there would have been no need to tell this story, but he didn't. The gambling madness was aroused within him, and he forgot all about the dangers of his position, and the duty that he owed to himself and his father.

He went on, thinking of nothing but the cards and the possibilities attached to their combinations, and the result was that by two a.m. he was cleaned out even to the last half-crown, while Yorke was £250 to the good and Mr Vansyller had displayed a grip of the game and a pluck and pertinacity in seeing his opponents out which had been very little expected of him, and which had resulted in the accumulation of the pile of notes and gold in front of him amounting to very nearly a thousand pounds.

Then the party broke up. Savil, sullen and callous to everything now that everything was lost, bade a hasty "Good-night" all round and started off to walk home to his house in Westbourne Terrace partly because he wanted to argue the matter over once more with himself, but chiefly because he hadn't as much in his pocket as would pay the cab fare. His head was aching savagely and all his nerves were tingling with the excitement of the game on which he had staked everything and lost.

The farther he went the darker and more hopeless his position seemed to be. There was not a ray of hope to be seen in any direction. In a few days he would not only be dishonoured according to the code of his kind but he would be ruined and disinherited as well.

By the time he got to the Marble Arch he had come to the conclusion that the future was not worth facing. He stopped and thought of the Serpentine away yonder behind the trees of the park.

Surely it would be better for him to drop into the water off the bridge and be done with it all than to drag out a miserable existence of poverty and discredit in which he would sink lower and lower as he went on until after all he would probably come to the same end, for he knew himself well enough to know that he was the last man in the world to wrest fortune out of misfortune by dint of sheer hard work.

He turned into the park and started off down the broad path which leads across to the Magazine. The night was dark and he strode along with his hands deep in his pockets and his chin on his breast. He never expected to meet anyone there at that time of night, but by the time he had covered two-thirds of the distance he ran squarely into someone, and heard a voice with a distinct Bostonian drawl say:

"Hello, sir! I should have thought this road was about wide enough for two to get past. You ought to keep a brighter look out a dark night like this."

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure," stammered Savil, stooping to pick up his hat which had fallen off in the collision. "Why, Mr. Vansyller, is it you? What on earth are you doing here at this time of night?"

"I might ask you the same, Mr. Savil," replied the American a little more politely than he had spoken before. "What I'm doing here is trying to find myself, for I'm lost. You see I took a cab from Piccadilly Circus and told the fellow to drive me to Victoria Hotel down yonder in Brompton, while I ought to have told him to go to the Great Western at Paddington.

"I don't know whether I got too much champagne inside me at the club or what it was, but I clean forgot that I'd ordered my traps to be sent over to the Great Western this afternoon because I'm going down West to Plymouth and round there first thing in the morning.

"I remembered this by the time I got to the corner of the park, and as I had a bit of a head on me I thought a walk wouldn't do me any harm, so I got down and started out to find the Marble Arch, and now I don't know where I am.

"Fool of a thing to do, wasn't it, considering I've got about a thousand pounds in this bag which I bought from the steward of the club to carry the plunder in?"

Savil saw at a glance that the American, though not drunk, had drunk quite enough champagne to make him talkative and careless. He looked at the bag which he could just see dimly in the darkness. There was a thousand pounds in notes and gold inside it—more than enough to repair all that he had lost, to redeem his position in the present, and to insure him riches and a title in the future.

It was a strong temptation, and he was in no state of mind to resist it. A plan instantly took shape in his mind as though some evil spirit had put it there complete.

He laughed good-humouredly and said.

"Well, do you know, I was doing very much the same thing, only I haven't lost myself. You're a good way from the Marble Arch and those are the only gates open on that side, but as I may as well go back now if you'll come with me I'll soon put you in the way of getting a cab in Oxford Street and then you will be at the Great Western in ten minutes."

"Good for you," said Vansyller. "Very kind of you indeed. I shall be most obliged to you. I began to get a bit skeery all alone here in this place with all this money about me."

"Oh! that'll be all right," said Savil. "Come along; this way."

They turned back together, and Savil took the first turning to the left, leading in the direction of Kensington Gardens. He knew the park thoroughly, and he took this path because he had determined by fair means or foul to have enough of the contents of the bag to save him from the ruin to which he had chosen death as a preferable alternative.

He determined to try fair means first and bringing the conversation round to the night's play and his losses he unbosomed himself to the American and put his whole position before him, winding up by asking him point-blank to lend him £500 out of his winnings.

Vansyller refused in no more words than it took him to say that he was not accustomed to lend large sums of money to casual acquaintances. A few pounds for present requirements, but five hundred—"That's two thousand dollars, you know," as he put it—was laying it on a lot too thick, and he was not the sort of man to do it.

Savil choked back his rage and disappointment, said that it didn't matter very much, as at the worst he would be able to get it from his father, and turned the subject off, with an apology for troubling him with his private affairs.

Then they tramped on through the darkness towards the Gardens until they reached a dark and lonely spot under the trees. Savil had taken a long-bladed, buck-horn handled pocket-knife from his waistcoat and opened it in his great coat pocket.

"This Marble Arch seems an almighty long way off," said Vansyller, somewhat alarmed to see the gloom growing deeper and deeper the farther they went.

"We're not far off it now," said Saville, pointing ahead. "Look, you can see the point of it through those trees."

The American leant forward, peering in the direction

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pointed out. The next moment Savil's left arm was round his throat, choking back the cry that rose to his lips, and before he could make a struggle in self defence the thin, sharp blade of the knife was buried in his heart.

It was a very small wound and the bleeding was almost entirely internal. There was a seat close by under one of the trees, and Savil, leaving the knife in the wound, to keep the murdered man's clothes against it, dragged the body to it and put it in a sitting posture propped up against one of the arms.

Then he opened the bag, emptied several handfuls of gold into his pockets, picked out the largest notes he could find in the dark, and then, closing the bag, he put it beside his body and strode off rapidly towards the Marble Arch. He managed to get out of the park unobserved and made the best of his way home. He had purposely left the knife behind him, because it was not his, but one that he had picked up in a railway carriage two days before, and as no one knew he had it, it could furnish no clue against him.

As he was occupying just then a separate room from his wife on account of one of many quarrels, no one knew what time he got home. He counted the money that he had become a murderer to get, and found that he had got a little over £550. He locked it away safely, drank half a tumblerful of neat brandy, and got into bed—not to sleep, but to enact the tragedy in the park over and over again till daylight, and then at last he fell asleep to dream of it.

He went to the office as usual that day, and, coming back in the evening, he saw on the placards of the evening papers: "Murder and Robbery in Hyde Park. An Arrest." He bought a paper at Aldersgate Street, and while he was waiting for his train read the news which possessed such a terrible interest for him.

Stripped of its sensational garnishing it came to this. An American gentleman of wealth, named Nasmyth P. Vansyller, had been found on a seat under the trees near Kensington Gardens with the large blade of an ordinary pocket-knife buried in his heart. A small handbag, containing but a few loose coins, was found beside him.

Soon after daybreak that morning the police on duty at the Marble Arch had arrested a man named James Fordham, a mechanic out of work, on suspicion of robbery. As this man was going out of the park it was noticed that he was holding his pockets very carefully, as though he had something hidden in them. A policeman stopped him on suspicion, and as he did so the man started back in a fright, and a sovereign dropped down the leg of his ragged trousers, evidently from a hole in his pocket.

He was at once searched, and notes and gold to the amount of over £400 were found upon him. While he was at the police station to which he had been taken, news of the finding of the dead body came, and a charge of murder was added to that of robbery. Thereupon the man confessed that he had been sleeping all night in the park and, starting to come out at daybreak, he had seen a gentleman apparently sitting asleep on a seat with a bag beside him.

He thought he was drunk, and curiosity made him look into the bag. He saw the money in it, and, having been out of work, and nearly starving, for six weeks, he had been overcome by the temptation and had taken it. He, however, strenuously denied the charge of murder, and protested that he knew nothing more than what he had told.

Savil's left arm was round his throat.

Later on in the day a Mr. Frank Yorke, from whom a note of invitation was found on the body of the murdered man, had been communicated with. He at once attended and identified the body, and recognised the numbers of some of the notes. He said the notes were part of a large sum that Mr. Vansyller had won at cards the night before. The accused was taken before the magistrate, charged with murder and robbery, and stood remanded to the following day.

Although, in one sense the fact that the murder bade fair to be fastened upon someone else was a momentary relief to Savil's mind, the identification of the notes by Yorke completely confounded him and brought home to him the horrible conviction that he had stained his hands with blood for nothing.

He dare not venture to cash the notes that he had, for fear they would be identified, and this would leave him nearly £300 short of the sum which he intended to tell Yorke he had received from his father on making full confession of his lapse and giving him his oath that he would never gamble again.

As soon as he got home he put the notes in the fire. This left him over £200 in gold. At first he thought of flying the country, but this plan he dismissed very soon, for not only was the amount wholly insufficient for such a purpose, but his flight would bring immediate suspicion upon him.

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He saw now what a fatal error he had made in not taking all the money and the bag as well, for there was sure to be a searching inquiry into the cause of the difference between what Vansyller was known to have had with him and the amount that had been found on Fordham. If he had only taken it all and sunk the bag in the Serpentine, whether anyone had been arrested for the murder or not, the fate of the bag and the money would have remained a mystery.

Now he dare not even spend the gold that he had in paying a portion of his racing debts, for, to his morbidly excited mind that would immediately excite suspicion against him, and if any inquiries at all were made as to how he got it, a few lines from Yorke to his father would prove instantly that he had not had it from him.

Dropped forward on his desk, with his face buried in his hands.

The next day, James Fordham was brought up on remand and committed for trial on the capital charge. His statement had been wholly disbelieved and the only mystery about the case seemed to be what had become of the rest of the money. A new horror was now added to Savil's mental misery. It seemed almost certain that an innocent man would suffer for the crime which he had committed with so little result, and thus he would have the blood of two instead of one upon his soul.

As the fatal Monday came rapidly nearer, with its inevitable ruin and exposure, his misery began to degenerate into madness, and his thoughts turned once more to suicide. He had nothing to live for. Why should he let an innocent man be hanged for him, when his own life was no use to him?

On the Friday night he made up his mind to do the only act of justice he could do and then end his life. He sat down and wrote a full confession, describing why and how he had committed the crime, and what he had done with the money. He put this in a blue envelope, addressed it to the Magistrate of the Marylebone Police Court, and put it in the drawer of his writing-table.

The next day as he was going to the City he took with him a prescription for some morphia and strychnine pills which his doctor had prescribed for him some months before. He had these made up at three or four different chemists, and so obtained enough to poison him with certainty. It was his intention to go home after office hours, post the confession, which he had not dared to carry about with him for fear of an accident, and then poison himself.

He had scarcely taken his place in the office when a telegram was brought to him. He opened it, glanced at the few words which it contained, and then ordered the boy out of the room in a voice scarcely recognisable as his own, and dropped forward on his desk with his face buried in his hands, sobbing out:

"My God! I've done it all for nothing"

The telegram was to tell him that his father had died suddenly of apoplexy, shortly after six that evening, and this meant that he was master of the Berkshire estate and £7,000 a year.

The first thing he did after regaining a little self possession was to get into a hansom and drive off home as fast as he could to destroy the confession. Life was very different now; it was worth living, and the poor wretch of a mechanic might swing for him! What did he, Sir Percy Savil, of Trenton Abbey, care for that?

When he reached home he went to his room, took out his keys and put one into the keyhole of the drawer into which he had put the fatal document. It was unlocked, for in his distraction he had forgotten to lock it. With the beads of perspiration standing out upon his brow, he dragged the drawer open. The blue envelope was gone, and in its place lay a note scribbled in pencil by his wife. With trembling hand he picked it up from the drawer and read it:

I have long known that you were a fool and a brute, and I have just learnt that you are a murderer. I will not betray you, unless the man who is charged with the murder is found guilty, but I will live under the same roof with you no longer. Don't follow me, or find out where I am, at your peril.

KATE.

With a cry of fury almost like the howl of a wild beast he sprang from the chair and began pacing up and down the room. Only two thoughts were clear in his distracted mind: he must at once go to Trenton, and he must get the confession back at any price, and all risks, but he must go to Trenton first. That was inevitable and he went.

Four days later he had buried his father and was Sir Percy Savil of Trenton. The next day he returned to town and put a skilful private detective on the track of his wife. After a week of agonising suspense, he received a note from this man to say that his wife under her old stage name, Miss Kate Nelson, had taken an engagement to go to America, and would leave for Liverpool the next day. He had inclosed her London address.

That was the day of the trial of Fordham at the Old Bailey, and there was not an hour to be lost. So determined to make one desperate effort to recover the confession from his wife, he got into a cab and drove off to his wife's lodgings in an obscure street off Essex Road, Islington. She was not in when he got there, but he gave a false name, saying that he had called on urgent theatrical business, and asked to be allowed to wait, as she was expected in in about an half-an-hour.

He waited an hour, and then she came. As she opened the door and saw him, she staggered back in such undisguised horror, that his blood rose in ungovernable fury in an instant.

"What have you come here for?" she said. "Didn't I tell you that you would follow me at your peril?"

"You know what I've come for," he said hoarsely, "And I'm going to have it before I go away."

She made a motion as though to turn and leave the room, but he was too quick for her. He had risen as he spoke and crossed the room, with three long swift strides. He saw her mouth open to scream, and like a flash his hand darted out and was clasped over her lips. Then with the other he seized her by the back of the

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neck, and held her powerless either to move or utter a sound. He pulled her back against the door and shut it with his foot. Then he hissed in her ear:

"Now utter a sound above your breath and it shall be the last you'll ever make. I've something to live for now, and I'm going to live. Give me that confession quietly and you shall have two thousand a year for life. Refuse, and I'll kill you. Now which will you have?"

He took his hand from her mouth and waited for her reply. She didn't scream or make any attempt to leave the room, but she looked at him with eyes burning with hate, and said in a voice that trembled with a passion almost equal to his own:

"You hound, to strike me like that! Haven't you ill-treated me enough already? Why couldn't you let me go to America without seeing your face again? No, I won't give you your confession, and I've a good mind to hang you, you brute, for you're not fit to live.

"Get out of the room, and never come near me again. Send me the two thousand a year, and as long as you send it you shall be safe, always supposing they don't hang Fordham. This is the day of the trial, you know."

She spoke the last words in a bitter, taunting tone which turned his anger into absolute madness. He sprang at her again, and caught her by the throat. As he did so she picked up a dinner knife that was lying on the table which had been laid for supper. She made a stab at his face with this, but he parried the blow, and in a moment he had wrested the knife out of her hand, and, still holding her by the throat, with his left hand he lifted the knife and said:

"Now. Which is it, for the last time—the confession or this?"

At the sight of the threatening steel her nerve failed her, and with trembling lips and in a half-choked voice she stammered:

"I can't give it you, Percy, because I haven't go it."

"What?" he shouted. "You've sent it, have you? Curse you, take that," and before she could say another word the knife was buried deep in her throat.

She dropped to the floor almost without a groan, but she was not dead, for when he stooped over her, overcome with a sudden revulsion of horror at what he had done in the moment of blind passion, and tried to staunch the blood that was flowing from the wound in her neck, she looked up at him and said in a weak voice, half choked by the internal bleeding of the wound:

"You fool! I never meant to hang you, and I couldn't have done, for I burnt the confession when I found it. I didn't want to be pointed out as a murderer's wife, and I knew you'd be rich some day. But you won't now for you'll hang for this."

Then her head fell back, there was a rattle in her throat, and after a few convulsive struggles for breath she was dead.

Sir Percy Savil did not hang for either of his murders, although he saw that there was no escape from the consequence of his last crime. He had his pills still in his pocket, for he had carried them ever since he bought them.

He emptied the box into his mouth, took a gulp of water from a bottle on the table, and walked out into the street and gave himself up to the first policeman he saw, confessing both the murders to him there and then. As the astonished man took him into custody, wondering whether he was mad or not, a boy came running down the street with a flaring placard with the words in big red letters: "Hyde Park Murder. Verdict and Sentence."

"They won't hang him now, will they?" said Savil to the policeman.

"Not if what you've told me's true," replied the man. And they didn't.

GEORGE GRIFFITH.

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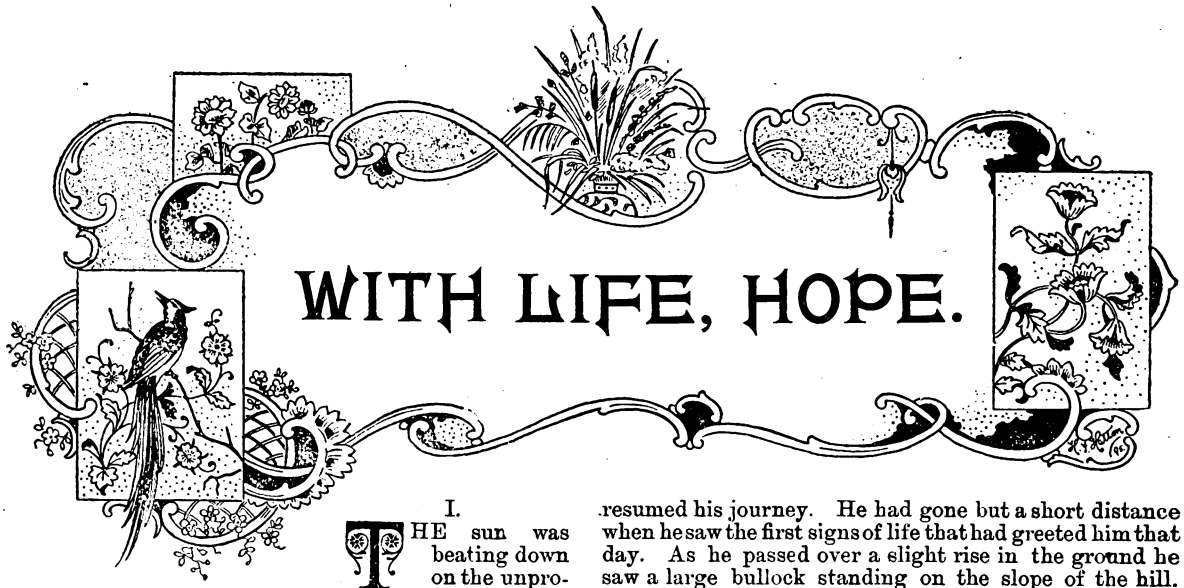

WITH LIFE, HOPE.

I.

THE sun was beating down on the unprotected earth. The defenceless soil smoked and quivered under his continued rays, its sides parched and cracked open. The streams murmured in subdued tones, the crickets creaked a dismal refrain.

Only one adventurous mortal was braving the tropical noonday heat. Slowly he toiled over the low, rolling hills, their sides bronzed with exposure, unprotected as they were by tree or shrub. No green thing in sight to rest the eyes from the glare of dried earth and grass; nothing to relieve save the hazy and uncertain outlines of the distant hills, that danced like a will-o'-the-wisp in the smoky atmosphere. The hot air scorched his nostrils as he inhaled it, and then came back from his lungs with increased heat; his face was dry and burned, and through the gaping pores no grateful moisture came. Yet on he strode, with steady swinging pace, as if heat and cold were alike indifferent to him.

He was indeed well calculated to withstand the buffets of the weather or the fiercer attacks of his fellow men. More than six feet in height, his broad shoulders and well-proportioned figure made him seem much shorter, and his easy, graceful movements evidenced a control of every muscle that could come only from constant active exercise. A long, reddish blonde beard covered his face, which was bronzed by exposure almost to the colour of his beard, and his long hair fell in waves upon his shoulders. His whole appearance was striking, yet the most striking feature was his piercing blue eyes, which seemed to look you through and through, and announced plainly that their owner could not shirk from danger or hardship in whatever form it might come.

His costume was that of a hunter, and indicated—as did his small cap, made of the skin of an animal, even more strongly—that its purpose was to withstand a much colder climate than that which he was now experiencing. Upon his back was slung a well-fashioned rifle.

II.

PAUSING on the crest of a small hill he glanced around him towards the distant line of hills, and then, turning his course towards their nearest point, he resumed his journey. He had gone but a short distance when he saw the first signs of life that had greeted him that day. As he passed over a slight rise in the ground he saw a large bullock standing on the slope of the hill. The animal saw him at the same moment, and turning towards him stood looking at the intruder. Soon several more appeared, regarding him attentively, and then the whole band began moving slowly across his path, about a hundred yards in front of him.

Pushing on his course he paid no attention to them, until they again attracted his notice by the peculiarity of their actions. The whole band of about a hundred cattle were now in sight, and were circling around him with steadily increasing speed. It was evident that he was the object of their attention, and he attempted to frighten them away by shouting and waving his arms, but these efforts were without avail. On the contrary the animals had drawn about him in a circle, and were now approaching nearer and nearer, drawing the circle tighter about him every moment.

He saw that it was practically impossible to break through their line, and yet to stand there and await their attack was certain death. Their long, sharp horns gleamed viciously in the sunlight. Glancing hastily around he sought some tree or rock that might offer some shelter from their attack. But there was none within reach; nothing within that fatal circle to relieve the monotony of the shining slippery grass. There was no time to be lost, for the circle was constantly growing smaller, and the animals becoming more and more closely packed. Quick as thought he formed his plan of action. Unslinging his rifle, he prepared to shoot one of the animals in front of him, hoping in the confusion that would follow to break through the lines and find shelter among some trees at the foot of the hill. Bringing the rifle to his shoulder he prepared to make his single shot as effective as possible.

III.

"Do not shoot! I implore you, do not shoot."

The voice came from behind him, and he turned in surprise in that direction. His astonishment was considerably increased when he saw a horse approaching at full speed, and upon its back a young girl, whose long, black hair, loosened by her riding, was streaming out behind her, while she anxiously urged her horse onward. As he looked, her horse dashed into the

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circle, and the nearest cattle were turned and headed down the hillside. With a dexterity that astonished him she "rounded up" the herd, and soon had them all started down the side of the hill after the leaders, and then halted her horse alongside of him.

The situation was an embarrassing one for him, and for once in his life he felt uncomfortable and ill at ease. To require assistance in getting out of a bad scrape was no new experience, but to have the whole matter taken out of his hands, and to be rescued from his peril while he stood idly by was unpleasant; to have this done by a woman was humiliating He stood looking at her awkwardly, while she sat shyly returning his glance. Indeed, she felt as uncomfortable as he, though he was too confused to notice it. Finally, he recovered himself sufficiently to speak.

"I have to thank you," he said. "They would probably have killed me." There was no trace in his voice of the excitement of the situation from which he had just been rescued.

She looked at him curiously, for evidently his mode of dress puzzled her.

"Where do you come from?" she inquired at length.

The tone of uncertainty and the abruptness of the question discovered to him the fact of her embarrassment and gave him that feeling of superiority that enabled him to regain his self-possession.

"From England originally, but from the Blue Mountains lately," he answered with a smile.

"The Blue Mountains?"

"Yes; you have not heard of them? They are far away to the north of here, many hundred miles I have travelled alone for many months. Until now I have not seen a human being for weeks."

"But how did you know we lived here?"

"I did not know."

"Then why do you come."

"I have travelled for pleasure, for curiosity. I wished to see this southern country, where the sun burns you up."

"I do not understand," she said quietly. "Where are you going?"

"I do not know. Anywhere; I am going now to these mountains," pointing to the distant line of hills.

"But you will first come with me? You must rest until it is cooler. Nobody travels here in the heat of the day; it would kill you. You must come and eat with us, and then we can give you a horse to continue your journey, and tell you how to go. Oh! in this heat and this country to think of walking!"

"I thank you, no. I must go on."

"In the heat? You will die. You must come with me. My father and mother will welcome you. I wish you to come."

He looked at her closely for the first time, and then he wondered why he had not noticed her beauty before. She was dark, with that Spanish complexion through which the warm blood showed with a rich colour, heightening the brilliancy of her lustrous black eyes which lighted up her whole face with a tender, trusting expression. Her raven hair hung in masses upon her shoulders. And as she leant forward with a confiding, intreating gesture, he thought he had never seen so beautiful a woman.

"I will come," he said briefly, and as she turned her horse in the direction of her home, he walked on by her side. So they journeyed in silence for a time.

"I must thank you for saving my life," he said, at length. "They would surely have killed me, and you ran a great risk yourself."

"If you had shot at them I could not have turned them away," she answered. "They would have been angry. You should not have walked here; they do not attack one who rides, but when you walk they will kill you."

IV.

BEFORE long they came in sight of the hacienda, a long, low house, upon a flat with neither tree nor shrub near, but upon one side the steep spurs of the range of hills came almost to the house, forming deep cañons.

The old folks received the traveller kindly, listened gravely to the story of his adventure, and then showed him to an apartment in the house where he might rest until his meal was prepared. But he was in no mood to rest. The indolent Spanish customs suited him but ill, for he was unaccustomed to the heat of the weather and the habits that it necessitated. Besides, his mind was far from easy. He was of a quiet disposition naturally, and loved solitude. His impulse, even while prompted by gratitude to the girl for the service she had rendered him, was to retreat from the settlement. But she exercised a strange fascination over him, and, though he would not confess it even to himself, it was to be near her to feast his eyes upon her beauty, that he had accepted her invitation.

It was with a pleasing fiction by which he only half deceived himself, therefore, that he now sought the low verandah in front of the house, "to enjoy the fresh air outside."

"Josefa is preparing a little supper for you," explained the old man as he sat puffing a cigarette.

The stranger seated himself near the door, where he might see the lithe, slender figure of the girl as she flitted about inside, produced a pipe after having refused a proffered cigarette, and was soon entertaining the old man with stories of his adventures among Indians and wild beasts. The Mexican listened gravely, only half understanding the allusions of his guest to unfamiliar localities and customs, yet refraining from asking questions lest he might seem inquisitive about the visitor's antecedents.

Soon Josefa, having finished her preparations, came and stood by her father, and the stranger found fresh enthusiasm for his narrative in her evident admiring interest.

The afternoon shadows lengthened imperceptibly as he continued his reminiscences, and the sun was almost disappearing behind the distant hills, when they sat down to the meal which Josefa had prepared some hours before. He became more and more interested in the girl, and it required but little pressing to persuade him to stay with them that night. The next day he was even more reluctant to leave, and they seemed equally loth that he should do so, and so his stay was extended two or three days.

V.

ONE evening as he stood with Josefa, talking of anything so that he might have the pleasure of her company, and wondering whether the moon ever shone so beautifully before, she suddenly said to him: "Manuel is coming home to-morrow."

"Manuel! Who is Manuel?"

"Ah, you do not know him," she said. Then after a pause, as if reluctant, yet anxious to tell her secret, she added: "We are to be married; he is my lover, and I shall marry him next week. Oh, you should see Manuel! So handsome! not handsome like you are,

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but like a Spaniard. You must stay and see Manuel; I would show him the big, strong man I saved."

"I would no doubt entertain him." It was the tone rather than what he said that arrested her attention.

"Ah, I have hurt you now," she said, laying her hand gently on his arm as he turned away. "Forgive me; it was but a joke I intended. You are so good and strong, I did not think."

"Forgive you!" he cried. "You could not offend me; I would give my life to make you happy." Then, as she looked at him in surprise at the earnest intensity of his speech, he added: "Have you not saved my life? And so you see it belongs to you. And you love Manuel very much?"

"Why, yes. Are we not to be married?"

"Then I am glad that you will be happy."

"And you will stay and see Manuel?"

"Yes, I will stay. Now I want to be alone," he added abruptly, and she turned into the house murmuring to herself: "He is so strange. I cannot understand. He is different, that's what it is; he is different." And with this somewhat obscure explanation she was content.

VI.

But with the visitor it was far otherwise. As she disappeared from his view he strode out in the moonlight and paced up and down with quick, nervous strides. The bright moon cast a flood of silver light over the scene, but somehow the beauty seemed to have departed from it for ever. A gentle breeze fanned his brow, but he was too agitated to feel its soothing effect.

"I might have known it," he muttered. "What am I, that I should hope to win such a prize? A wanderer, without a home that I might offer her. Fool that I was to have stayed here, when I might have known that she would have some lover among her own people. But what right has he to interfere? Stay to see him? Yes, I shall stay, and I shall kill him."

Suddenly he stopped short.

"Bah!" he exclaimed. "A fine thing this, for a man like me to give up in this way. To think that a gentle, timid creature like that should make me mad with pain. I have but to say: 'It is over,' and I shall suffer no more."

But his will was weaker than his philosophy. He retired, but not to rest.

He tossed about in a troubled, feverish sleep until daylight, and then rose and strode out into the open air. The atmosphere of the house seemed to stifle him; his old restless longing for an active life was upon him, and he must be moving. "If I had not promised her to see this man," he murmured, "I would go now, and be among the mountains once more. Nature is the only thing that is true, after all. Yet why should I wait to see him? She would be disappointed and unhappy; but am I not unhappy? Shall I go?"

VII.

Nevertheless, in spite of his determination, he lingered on through the day, and into the afternoon. The day was hotter than any he had ever experienced. The atmosphere became more smoky, until the sun shone through it with a lurid light. Even the Spaniards felt prostrated by the unusual heat, and Josefa glanced anxiously towards the mouth of the cañon through which the trail wound by which Manuel was to return. He had gone across the mountain with a herd of cattle, his only companion being a Mexican vanquero, and he had been expected to reach home that morning, but still he did not come.

Suddenly a low, distant rumbling was heard, and a sound as of a strong wind blowing through the trees. The rumbling increased in volume, and the earth began to sway with a sharp, quick motion, that seemed to increase in force with each movement.

"An earthquake!" exclaimed Josefa, springing forward with blanched cheeks. "And Manuel is in the cañon! He will be killed, he will be killed!"

The few horses that were near the house were running wildly to and fro, and the cattle were bellowing, adding to the confusion of the moment. Josefa rushed forward, and securing her favourite horse, was on his back and speeding towards the cañon in a moment. Despite his nervous and excited condition, the traveller rose and followed her as fast as he could, and as the trail in the cañon was difficult for horses, owing to the loosened boulders that had lodged across it and broken it away in places, he overtook her before she had gone far.

"You must not come here," he cried. "The earthquake has loosened these boulders and has cracked the trail, so that it may give way at any moment. Go back, and if Manuel is in the cañon I will find him and bring him safely to you."

"No, I must come," she said briefly, and on they went up the trail. They had not gone far when they came upon the object of their search. Manuel was lying in the trail, beneath an immense boulder, which, wedged between the bank and a small tree on the outer edge of the trail, rested upon his legs so that he could not move, though his arms and body were free.

Although he was not badly hurt, his position was a precarious one, for the boulder in striking the tree had loosened the roots, and the whole trail at that point was likely to give way at any moment, plunging him a thousand feet down the precipice.

VIII.

Keeping Josefa back from the dangerous point, he examined the situation thoroughly, and then shook his head gravely.

"There is but one way," he muttered to himself, "and any way it will pay my debt. A life for a life is fair turnabout." Then addressing Manuel, he said: "When I tell you push upward with your hand on the boulder, and lie as close to the inner wall as you can. Do you understand?"

"Yes," replied Manuel.

Stepping carefully over the crumbled earth, the stranger caught the small tree, and picked his way out until he stood over the precipice.

"Now push with all your might," he cried, and, giving himself a violent swing outwards, he threw all his weight upon the tree. It trembled a moment, and then the roots tore themselves loose, and tree, boulder, and man went crashing down the precipice.

Josefa, who had gone back round a bend in the trail, heard the crash, and stepping forward saw Manuel lying upon the edge of the trail, released from the boulder, but still lying upon the crumbling earth.

With a glad cry she rushed forward and helped him out of his peril. Then she looked round for his preserver. He was nowhere to be seen.

"Ah, he has gone," she said. "He said he would go when you came, and he has run away from us. But I have you now, Manuel, and I am so happy." Then, with a little shudder, as she looked over the edge of the trail of the seemingly bottomless abyss: "Suppose you had gone over there, Manuel. It would have been terrible!"

Barry Sharpe.

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THE ✦ WINNING ✦ OF ✦ GUNHILD:

Or, The Vengeance of the Vikings.

By GEORGE C. WALLIS, Author of "Behind the Barrier," etc.

SUMMARY.

Valstran, a Dane, attacks North-hold, a Viking homestead, during the absence of the young men. Sigismund and Olaf follow the raider, but are defeated, and Olaf is killed. Editha, their mother, and Earl Bjorne, her husband, induced their only remaining son to take Harald Aslison and go out again in the new ship, the *Walrus*. Before leaving, Harald plights his troth to his cousin Gunhild, daughter of Editha. While they are out fighting against great odds at sea, Turgrimm, a friend of Bjorne, comes upon the scene, but on learning that Harald requires help, refuses it, and goes on to Bjorne, whose daughter, Gunhild, he wishes to marry.

CHAPTER V.

How Harald Won the Wings.

Harald was not unconscious long. Eric and Sigismund together had turned Valstran's weapon back as it curved to the next stroke, and when Harald opened his eyes again these two were keeping off the Danes like the tough fellows they were. His head was throbbing with a violent pain, and all things swam before his eyes when he staggered to his feet and seized Longsword from one of his men.

But the son of Asli was made of hero-stuff, and, conquering his pain and unsteadiness with a mighty effort of will, he rushed into the fight anew, and, all bleeding and bruised as he was, slew three reckless Danes who came in the way of the keen blade. Then he met Valstran again hand-to-hand, though Eric would have held him back, and Sigismund cried out to the men to follow him closely and have an eye to the swinging axe of the foe.

"Stand back, men!" shouted Harald, so that his voice was heard above the roaring of the storm; "stand back, and let me have fair play with this blustering Dane! Stand back, I say!"

Reluctantly the men of North-hold obeyed, and the enemy also let their leader have a free space, and there the two met again in a duel that each knew would only end with the death of himself or the other. Valstran was by this time like a man bereft of his senses, so long and stubbornly had these sturdy Norsemen withstood him and his crew, and his swings, therefore, came fast and furious, his battle-axe strokes playing on Harald's defence like a fiery hail, and bearing him abaft before the fierceness of the onset.

The nearly-severed body was hurled . . . down into the hold.

Nevertheless, Aslison grew calmer as the fight went on, and though ever stepping back or sideways to avoid the crushing blows, kept a wary eye on the red-haired Dane's every move, and twice got the point of the long-sword through his guard, and drew blood on his left arm.

This made Valstran wilder than before, and he foamed at the mouth like a berserker, and gritted his teeth with rage, and redoubled his frantic efforts, till Harald saw that he must close with him, and that speedily, if he would keep a whole skin.

So just when the gleaming axe came sweeping down he sprang nimbly aside and let out suddenly in the other's face with the keen sword. Valstran saw the flash of the steel and jerked back his head so that the blade was foiled of its aim, but so great was the force that its owner's arm had given it, and so sharp its edge, that it passed clear through the thick pine shaft of the axe, severing it in twain as neatly as a woodman's knife lops off the dry branches of a sapless tree!

"It is a good blade that Thrunna gave me!" cried Harald with a grim laugh at his foe's discomfiture, "and well-tempered, I swear! It shall win me a name yet. And, Sir Dane, get you some other weapon, and let us finish this little bout of ours—if you dare!"

Stung to additional fury by the taunt, Valstran seized a sword and flew at his enemy, and the two were soon deeply engrossed in an interchange of straight cuts and short slashes and firm thrusts and swift strokes and lightning parries and cunning feints, till the young eyes and strong arms of Harald began to tell in his favour.

Then slowly he recovered the ground he had lost, and pressed the other back towards the fore hatchway. Valstran struck out at random now, and not so often, as his strength failed, and when, in recoiling from a flaming slash of the Norse blade, his feet caught in the combings of the hatch and he stumbled, Harald leapt forward with a fierce laugh, and raising the long sword high above his head, brought it down upon the other with such true aim and stern force, that the matchless edge cut right through chain-mail and jerkin and flesh and sinew and bone, and the nearly-severed body was hurled in a heap through the loosely-closed woodwork of the hatch down into the hold!

A mighty shout of victory rose from his men at that master-stroke, and with one accord they fell upon the startled Danes and quickly drove them to their own vessels, and then, led by Harald, boarded in their turn, and hunted them down and slew them one by one till not a Dane was left alive in the three ships, and the sea was rid for good and all of that sea-wolf and his ravening crew.

But when the struggle was over, they found Harald leaning against his own mast, his hot fingers still clutching the handle of the long sword, but so death-like a pallor on his face that it was visible under the wet salt glaze and in the dim light afforded by the stray moonbeams that now shot through the rapidly sailing clouds. Eric and Wulfhere saw him first and seized him ere he fell to the deck, and tenderly carried him to shelter and laid him on a rude couch and fetched Sigismund to him. Between the three of them they wiped the brine from his skin and washed him and then left him to sleep till dawn.

Meantime, the storm still raged—the Storm-Yötun, Aegar, was in one of his wildest moods—and not until far into the next day did the sea calm sufficiently for the sailors to unhook the grappling chains of the two empty ships and cast them loose with holes in their keels below the water-line so that they sank, and then, at Sigismund's command, they ran into a little solitary creek where only peaceful fisher-folk dwelt, and after quieting the alarm their sudden appearance caused, took Harald ashore and had him nursed in one of the huts.

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Some weeks the Vikings lingered there, resting and helping the villagers to fish and putting the *Walrus* to rights, and Harald recovered from his hurts and grew strong and well again and was impatient to be going home.

But Sigismund, who had a wise head on his young shoulders, would not hear of undue haste.

"The storm has blown us far out of the beaten track," he said to the fretful youth, "and though you have fairly won the right to wear the golden-winged helm of your father's, which you have in the ship, you must be well rested from the strain that the gaining of the right has cost you. And if that traitor Turgrimm has, indeed, gone to North-hold, as you fear, it will be well to be prepared with strong sinews and steady nerves for the meeting with him!"

"You are right, Sigismund," said Harald, stroking the fair curls of a little Norse maiden who clung to his knee—a little maiden whose blue eyes were as lustrous and deep as his sister Thelma's. "You are right; yet I fear every moment of delay while that crafty hound is there—for something of myself and Gunhild I must have told you when I raved in my fever-madness after that night?"

Sigismund understood and nodded, then said quietly, as was his habit when well pleased:

"No one better could I wish to be at once my cousin and brother. As soon as I feel justified in letting you go we will hoist sail."

And Harald held out his right hand and Sigismund grasped it, and the two looked into each other's eyes, and in the silence knew that their souls swore eternal friendship, and that the desire of each was henceforth to be aided by the other to the end of life—be it near or far.

Then after a few days more of rest, Sigismund gave way to Harald's pleadings, and they set the bow of the long ship for the fjord on which stood the home of their kith and kin.

The place seemed strangely deserted as they let down the gangway plank to the shore, and Harald felt a chill of terror at the silence of it all as he leapt to the ground in the fresh morning air.

"What evil thing has befallen the hold, Brun?" he inquired of a solitary fisherman whom they discovered mending his nets under the lee of an upturned boat. "Has some spell fallen on the place, that none of the folks are stirring?"

"Why, 'tis the young Earl!" cried Brun, uprising as quickly as the rheumatism in his old limbs would allow, "and all too late come, I fear, if you would have Gunhild to wife, as we all hoped."

"What has happened? Speak, man!" cried Harald, clutching his shoulder in the extremity of his fear for his love, till the old man cringed in his grasp, "out with your news, no matter how evil it may be!"

"Well, Earl Harald," said Brun, "this is Gunhild's wedding day, and all the folk are feasting in the grand hall, and I expect by now she is wife to surly Turgrimm, whom we all wish anywhere but here. But you have made my shoulder ache, young sir!"

Harald heard not the last half of the old man's tale: he was out of hearing before it was finished, and running as though for his life with long swinging strides up the hill to the hold, and had outdistanced the others by a hundred paces when he reached and opened the door, and burst in upon the amazed guests.

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The two looked into each other's eyes.

CHAPTER VI.

The Fight at the Feast.

Stalwart and glorious he looked as he stood there in the hall in the full glow of the sunlight that gleamed on the golden wings of his helm and glittered adown his mail and threw into bold relief the sinewy outlines of his form; and Gunhild, recognising him before any of the others save his mother, rose to her feet and gave a little cry of joyous surprise, and then, with a wild, impetuous motion, took the golden hoop that shone with gems as many as the stars in the northern crown, from among the sunny masses of her hair and threw it to the floor at Turgrimm's feet.

A moment they stood thus; the traitor who knew that his prey was snatched from him at the last, staring wildly at Harald through the smart of the ale in his eyes, and wishing that he had not hung his sword and belt on the wall opposite in order to indulge his appetite to the full. Then, as Sigismund and the others filled up the doorway behind him, Harald drew the long sword from its sheath and said:

"You offer me no greeting, Uncle Bjorne, when I return with name and fame and the wings upon my head? You thank me not for coming in time to save Gunhild the disgrace of being wife to a cowardly traitor!"

"Yes, you are strangely silent, husband," said Editha, before Turgrimm could reply to the purposed insult.

"Peace, woman!" cried the old Earl, rising in his place,

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"let us know what has kept you away this long time, Harald Aslison, and why you speak of my guest thus?"

His manner was stern and his voice threatening, for Bjorne was in a very irritable mood, being neither pleased with himself nor with anyone else.

"Sigismund shall tell you what has kept us away so long," said Harald, smiling grimly, "and then you will not need to ask why I spoke as I did."

And he leant on his sword whilst his cousin told the tale of Turgrimm's meanness and his own brave deed, and at the hearing of how he had slain Valstran, such a wild Viking cheer went up from the men of North-hold that the rafters rang again with its echo, and a kestrel wheeling in mid air near the cliffs was startled by the sound of it.

And Freyda whispered to Gunhild, seeing the girl's secret in her burning cheeks and flashing eyes: "He is a worthy lover for you—this son of mine!"

Gunhild answered not, but clasped Harald's mother's hand tightly in her own, and with her free arm pressed wondering Thelma to her side. Harald, seeing the three standing together at the far end of the table, was glad, but had no time for gentle words just then.

"Yes; Earl Bjorne," he said, "that is our story, and that is why I ask you how it is you thank me not for coming to save Gunhild from being wedded to this knave."

The old man groaned aloud, answering not, but Turgrimm replied, attempting to brave the matter out:

"The marriage feast shall not be stopped by the idle, spiteful chatter of a braggart stripling but just out of his teens. To your tables, men, and when the ceremonies are over I will set you to chastise this bitter-tongued youngling for his false sneers."

Instead of noticing him, however, all men turned to look at Harald, who strode a step nearer to his rival, and said calmly:

"You fear my strength and skill, traitor, or you would have given me back my charges at the sword point, poltroon that you are!"

"I do not waste good steel on rash youngsters," said Turgrimm, though shifting uneasily, and glancing furtively and longingly at his heavy blade on the wall.

"Nithing!" cried Harald, raising his sword till it flashed in his hand like a bar of light, "*Nithing!* You are not worth a fair fight, and so, by all the Gods of Asgard, if you do not turn at bay, I will cut you down, even here, in my uncle's hall, come what may of it!" And the long blade came to within an inch of Turgrimm's side.

The craven hesitated no longer then, but ran round the table for his own weapons, and Harald came after so close on his heels that in fear of the keen blade behind, Turgrimm passed them without a stop, and would have slunk outdoors but that Sigismund and the others barred his way. Then twice more round the table he sped, with Longsword after him, while the men of North-hold roared aloud at his evil plight, and the women laughed and called him "nimble-feet," and his own men sat and muttered under their breath till presently one of these latter put out his foot as Harald came past, and tripped him to the floor.

In an instant he was afoot again, and an arrow of Eric's quivered in the man's back, but Turgrimm had seized the chance and his shield and blade, and stood on the defensive, calling to his crew to aid him.

At that Sigismund and the men of the *Walrus* got out their weapons, and fell upon the guests, and then uprose such a clamour in North-hold Hall as had never been known since Bjorne's grandfather Offa had slain Edda his brother as he sat drunk in his chair, for jealousy.

The women clung together at the lower end of the room, palely anxious, but without cry or sound, while the men of the *Walrus* and the men of the *Hawk* fought and struggled in the *mêlée* of overturned tables and broken stools and spilt ale, and food trampled underfoot, and so fiercely they strove that twice Turgrimm fell and escaped by the skin of his teeth, that a flying dagger, missing its aim, was embedded to

An arrow of Eric's quivered in the man's back.

the hilt in one of the criss-cross beams of the wall, and that two of the combatants who were locked in the death-grip near the fire fell upon the blazing logs in a helpless heap, when one of Eric's arrows pierced the follower of Turgrimm in the side, and they were with difficulty got out and separated before being burned beyond hope.

The opposing parties were evenly matched, and the fray might have been long-drawn-out had not Earl Bjorne—having held his men back with great trouble—at last made his stern voice heard above the wild tumult, and commanded that as they all valued the rules of hospitality and common civility they would hold down their weapons in his house while they called themselves his guests and friends.

Harald had already shivered his enemy's blade with his own ringing steel, and had got the traitor by the throat with his left hand, and was shortening his sword in the act of running him through, when the others dropped their hands, and he heard the words of Bjorne. Even then he would have made an end of his foe—and better it would have been had he done so—had not Gunhild rushed forward and stayed him with her hand.

"Nay, slay him not, Harald, but let him go like the disgraced cur that all men now know he is."

With a wild cry of hate and impotent chagrin, Turgrimm wrenched himself from Longsword's grasp, and calling his men together, went with them out of the hall in the midst of a great silence.

Six of the guests were left dead amid the wreckage of the feast, and five of the men of the *Walrus*. The first they took and flung outside to their comrades, the latter the

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"Slay him not, Harald!"

women cleansed and laid out on a rude bier, and then began putting the place to rights, as is the way of women in a house. And Harald sheathed his blade and went to old Bjorne and said:

"I crave pardon, uncle, for treating your guests so roughly. Pray tell me that I have your pardon—for I was sorely tried—and give me your permission and your men to hunt down this traitor without delay."

"And I, too, crave that boon," said one-armed Sigismund.

Bjorne thought moodily awhile before he spoke, meeting the approving gaze of his wife and of Asli's widow as he said:

"No, Harald. There has been blood enough spilt in my house to-day; enough of my visitors slain. Also, this man is the friend of my second cousin, Ogier, and for his sake I must let the coward and his crew go. For the rest, you have my pardon."

The two young men turned away at that, knowing further appeal would be useless, and Freyda and Thelma met Harald, and the one wept over him for joy at his success, and the other clung to his hand and gazed into his face with all a child's awe at the strong and marvellous.

"Yes, little one!" laughed Harald, raising his favourite to his shoulder, where she held on by the wings of his helm, "You will have a warrior do as much for you some day, with those wonderful deep eyes of yours!"

And then, after he was washed and refreshed, Harald sought out Gunhild—who was not hard to find—and they talked much. And Harald's man, Eric, stole round to the back of the house and made love to Iduna, Gunhild's maid.

CHAPTER VII.

The Coming of Ogier.

Though thus roughly repulsed, and with no excuse left for further lingering, Turgrimm—keeping for the most part of his time on board the *Hawk*, which lay moored below the landing-place—stayed in the fjord for several days, and when one misty morning he saw the peak-sails of a short but deep-draughted ship coming round the bend of the cliffs, he frowned angrily to himself and bade the men hoist a friendly signal.

In answer from the other vessel up went the fluttering ensign of the *Silver Fox* which Turgrimm knew so well as the name of his friend's ship, and presently unseen by the landsfolk, the sides of the two craft grazed and his friend Ogier stepped aboard the *Hawk*.

"Greeting, friend," said Ogier, grasping the other's hand, "what do you here?"

"I came after a girl's pretty face—more fool that I was—and have been well snubbed for my pains," said the other bitterly.

"After Gunhild?" asked Ogier. He was a man of few words, was this tall, dark warrior, whose cool bravery had won him wealth and renown in many a hot fight.

"Yes," answered Turgrimm, "and the saucy minx would have none of me, and her father and brother were full of harsh words. So I am sulking here until the fit seizes me to stir!"

Not a word of his own treachery and rough treatment; not a word of Harald!

"Well, friend," said slow-speaking Ogier, going back to his ship after some further talk, in which he made no mention of his own purpose, "I am here on a short visit, and I will talk of this with these relatives of mine."

And when the *Silver Fox* was out of the range of hearing, Turgrimm said aloud: "There goes his friendship, I'll warrant. It will be as well to be out of here before he knows the truth, for he is one of those silly sticklers at trifles who would slay himself or anyone else for honour!"

Ogier went in, and all innocent of the events of the last few weeks, was made as jovially welcome at dinner as the home folks could make him, and through the whole of that day thought that it was no marvel his friend had loved fair Gunhild, seeing that he—who was so very hard to move to tenderness for women—was even more in love with the Earl's daughter now than when he had last seen her, a year agone.

And when the women left the room at night, Ogier leant back in his chair and thought that the time had come to speak that which was in his mind. But being very sensitive to rebuffs, and more fearful of failure in love affairs than in matters of war, he resolved to speak to Gunhild before he mentioned his desire to her father. If she looked on him with favour, well and good; if not—and the way her eyes brightened when young Harald spoke to her gave Ogier some misgivings—if not, he would go away and try to forget.

Editha took Gunhild aside that night and said in a softer tone than was her custom:

"You will be asked again in marriage ere to-morrow night, child, for a multitude of lovers is the penalty of fairness such as yours. Shall I speak in this Ogier's favour for you, or not?"

"What mean you, mother?" said Gunhild, open-eyed, thinking of Harald the while, "how know you that our guest will do what you say?"

"I have made no mistake," said the Earl's wife, smiling

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shrewdly, "he is rich and a widower, and it is a long way here from his home. His glance was on you all the time you were in sight, and three times when Sigismund spoke to him he was so lost in reflection that he answered not. It will be as I say."

Gunhild was silent, and after a pause Editha went on:

"But there is one in whose favour I may speak, if Freyda tells me truly, and his name is not Ogier! Am I not right in that also, child?"

Gunhild's colour deepened and she would have said "yes," but that she was a little afraid of her stern mother even yet over this matter, so she said naïvely:

"I cannot feel the same for this Ogier that I do for cousin Harald."

Editha laughed softly to herself, and said no more.

Sure enough Ogier spoke to Gunhild, as her mother had prophesied, and that sooner than the girl had expected.

She had gone with Sigismund up the fjord to fish in the early morning, a time of day she dearly loved to be about, and which, perchance, had given that delicate rose tint to her fresh, young cheeks; when Ogier came pulling up the crystal waterway and joined them as they passed the spot where the river falls with a mellowed roar in twenty white-wreathed leaps into the deep flood below. Then Sigismund, feeling lazy, got ashore on a green island, and let the two go on, bidding them pick him up on the way back.

Silently the thoughtful man rowed up the still waters, past more green islets and clumps of wild raspberry and hemlock, behind which the buzzards called to each other, until they came to the shadow of the great cliff whose rocky face goes sheer down to the fjord bottom without a jutting crag or needle to entangle the fisher's lines.

On all sides of them—for Gunhild was in Ogier's boat—rose the fir-clad mountains, purple and stupendous, and on the bright greenery of birch and pine, and spruce twig and bilberry bush seen on the lower slopes, the dew-gems strung on the gauze-threads of the morning sparkled like a tracery of molten silver fire. And save for the occasional scream of a kestrel overhead or the rustle of the hawks as they sought their nests in the cliff-face, all was wrapped in a quiet that one hesitates to break.

Ogier.

Yet love unloosed the tongue of the man of few words, and presently, when the long weighted lines had been thrown and several good trout hauled in, Ogier, taking Gunhild's hand in his, said, with a heart-tremour such as he had never felt in the thick of the fiercest fray:

"Can you guess, fair Gunhild, why I am here at North-hold?"

"Partly, sir; but I wish you would not hold my hand so tightly. You are my father's cousin, and he is noted for his strict hospitality, and there is better fishing here than at most places!" and Gunhild looked at him shyly, yet with a merry laugh in her bright eyes.

"All excellent good reasons," said Ogier, his words coming with great trouble, "but not one of them is the true reason, fair child. There is a maiden lives at North-hold, with whom I am in love, and it is her presence that brings

"What mean you, mother?" said Gunhild.

me here. And you can tell me her name if you will, and whether my love is likely to be looked upon with favour."

It was in Gunhild's mind to ask, with a jest, whether this fair one was Iduna, her maid, but she glanced at Ogier ere she spoke and the smile died on her lips at the earnestness she saw there, and she replied:

"Yes, I know that it is I, Ogier, whom you would ask to love you. And sooner than trifle with such an honest heart as yours is, I must tell you that it cannot be."

Ogier was not downcast at once, but went on his knee before the fair girl—whose golden locks, escaping from her coif, shone in the morning sun like a shoulder-mantle of priceless worth—and bent his dark head over her dainty hand and kissed it reverently and said:

"I do not ask you to marry me at once, Gunhild, but I would plead that you think of me, and, if you can, come to love me, no matter how little. No other shall I have if I have not you, and no other can love you more deeply. Pray tell me there is hope, and I shall be more than satisfied."

The girl looked down at the man's bronzed, honest face, handsome now with the earnestness of his pleading, and tears stood in her grave eyes.

"I am more troubled than I can tell you, Ogier, that my luckless face should thus excite such a hopeless love in one so brave and true of heart, but it is better that you should know, once and for all, that it cannot be. There is another who loves me—whom I love."

"Harald?" asked the man, with a quiver in his voice.

"Yes, Harald," answered the girl, disengaging her hand.

"Well, he is a brave youth and a good one, Gunhild," said Ogier, rising and mastering his emotion like the true man he was, "and I pray that you and he may be happy."

"I trust that we shall, and I shall always remember your gentleness," said she; then added, a sudden thought arising: "Have you spoken to my father—of—of this?"

"No, child. I thought that yourself should best know your own mind's desire."

"Then I am more grateful than words can tell," said Gunhild, "and think it will be better for both of us if what has passed between us this morning remain known only to ourselves. It will save you from much thankless pity, Ogier, and me from much flattery."

"It shall be our secret," said Ogier.

Then they pulled in their lines and rowed back to the islet and roused Sigismund, and went home for the morning meal.

(To be concluded.)

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LEGENDS OF WOLFVILLE.

BY "DAN QUINN."

Wolfville is a Cattleman's Settlement in Arizona, and the Characters in these Legends are Cowboys.

No. 9.—Spanish Bill Helps Point a Moral.

"IT is just after Short Creek Dave gets to be one of them evangelists," remarked the old cattleman as we made company for each other one evening, "an' has been exhortin' of us Wolfville people over in the warehouse of the New York store, as Dan Boggs confides in me how once he mebby half-way makes up his mind he'll be religious.

"'Leastwise,' says Boggs, when he takes me into his past that away, 'I allows I'll be religious in the spring after the round-ups is iver.

"'It's in the winter when I makes this determination, an' of courze the spring round-up is months away. But I allers puts it up I'd shorely made it an' got plumb into the fold, only it was a bad winter, an' in the spring the cattle was weak an' starved; an' gettin' down an' chillin' to death about the water-holes; an' I was ridin' the hills a-cussin' an' a-pullin' of 'em up on to their feet; an' all 'round it's that rough an' I'm that profane an' violent, I reckons towards April probably my soul's buried under ten foot of cuss words, an' j'inin' the church in my case is mighty necessary.

"'You see,' says Boggs that time, 'thar's no use tryin' to hold out cards or coal-deck your Redeemer. If your heart ain't right it's no use to set into the game. He sees plumb through every card you holds, an' nuthin' but a straight deal from the warm deck does Him.

"'So I thinks bein' as how you can't fool your way into Heaven, an' recallin' the bad language I uses that spring an' winter workin' them cattle, I won't even try. An' that's why, when resolvin' one winter to get religion mebby next June, I don't get nothin' when June comes but whisky, an' goes on an' persists in my sinful life as thartofore.

"'It's over to Taos I gets this religious idea. I'm just into camp from some'ers down 'round Seven Rivers, in the Pecos country, an' I don't know a soul. Which I'm by nature sociable an' gregarious; so not knowin' what folks weighs an' preys on me, an' the first night I hastens to remedy this yere evil.

"'I'm the possessor of wealth to a limited extent—for I shore despises bein' broke complete, an' generally keeps as good as a blue stack in my war-bags—an' so I goes projectin' round from dance hall to saloon an' deciminates my dinero and acquires nose paint an' friends.

"'As that ain't but three saloons incloosive of the hurdy-gurdy, I'm goin' cursin' on these grand rounds I've instituted on a sort of triangle. It can't be said but I'm makin' runnin' of it, however, an' I don't reckon now it's more'n an hour when I knows all the good people in Taos, bar Mexicans an' what Eastern folks would get fooled into callin' "the bitter element." It also follows like its lariat does a loose pony, that I'm some loaded, not to say confoosed.

"'It's because I'm confoosed I'm misled into this prayer-meetin'. Not such exercises is due to dim my chances none now, nor yereafter, but I ain't calculated to adorn no such exercises, nor take proper part tharin; an' I'd shorely passed it up an' kept on to the hurdy-gurdy if I'd known.

"'As it stands, I blunders into the game inadvertent, but havin' picked up the hand I nacherally goes on an' plays it.

"'It's this way about them religious exercises: I'm just emerged from the "Tub of Blood," an' am p'intin' out for the dance-hall when I crosses the trail of a wickey-up all lighted, an' singin' on the inside. I takes it for a joint I don't know an' ain't seen none as yet, an' nacherally heads up an' enters. From the noise I allows mebby it's a Mexican place, which greasers allers puts up a heap o' singin' an' scufflin' an' talkin' in all they does from monte to a bull-fight.

"'The second I'm in I sees it ain't Mexicans an' it ain't monte. Good people they was; I sees that; an' as a passel of 'em near the door looks shocked at sight of me, I'm too bashful to break out again, but sorter aiges into the nearest seat an' stands pat.

"'I can see for all I has under my belt the outfit figgers on me raisin' the long yell an' stampedin' 'round permiscus to make trouble; an' so I thinks to myse'f I'll fool you all a lot, for I just won't say a word.

"'So I sets quiet as a coyote at noon, an' after a while the sharp who's dealin' for 'em goes on with his orisons which I interrupts as I comes surgin' in.

"'When he's talkin' he says one thing I remembers. It's about castin' your bread upon the waters. He allows you'll get it again an' plenty with it. It's playin' a white chip to win a blue; that's what this sharp says, an' it shorely strikes me as a dead easy game.

"'Every time you does good, says this sky pilot, Fate is out to play a return game with you; an' sooner or later you quits winner on all the good you promulgates that away.

"'I sets the deal out an' gets some sleepy at it too. But I won't leave till the end, so as not to scand'lise the congregation; an' as I contributes some heavy when the plate goes by, I ain't regarded as no setback to the meetin' neither.

"'When the contreebution box—which she's a tin plate—comes down where I be, I'm sorter noddin', I'm

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that sleepy. I hears the jingle of money an' rouses up thinkin' mebby it's poker I reckon.

"'"How hard are you in?" I says to the part next door to me who's just gone to the centre for a peso.

"'"Dollar," says the party.

"'"Well," I says, "I ain't seen my hand since the draw, but I'll raise yon nine just the same." An' I boards a ten-dollar bill.

"'When the rest goes I sorter sidles forth an' lines for the dance hall. The fact is, I'm needin' what you call stimulants. But all the same it sticks in my head about that bread business, an' castin' good deeds on the water that away. It sticks thar yet for that matter.

"'Bein' released from the devotions of them people I starts in to drinkin' agin with zeal an' earnestness. Thar comes a time when all my money is in my boot.

"'You see, I only takes two stacks of reds with me when I embarks on this yere debauch. Bein' some crafty; an' a new injun at that agency that away; an' not knowin' what game I may go against, I puts the rest of my bank roll over in Howard's store.

"'It turns out, too, that every time I acquires silver in change, I carefully commits it to my left boot, which is high an' ample an' seems to be built to hold specie.

"'Why I puts this yere silver money in my boot laig, is shore too many for me as a conundrum. But I recalls that I feels mighty cunnin' over it at the time, an' regards it as heap deep play.

"'As I tells you, thar arrives an hour while I'm in the "Tub of Blood," when my money's all in my boot an' thar's still liquor to be purchased. Fact is, I just then meets a gent named Hawkins; as good a citizen as ever rifles a deck, or pulls a trigger, an' of course p'liteness demands we put a bottle or two in play at once.

"'That's why I has to have money. I don't care to go pullin' off my boot in the "Tub of Blood," an' makin' of a vulgar display of my wealth by pourin' the silver on to the floor. Thar's a peck of it, if thar's dos reals; an' such an exhibition as spillin' it out in the "Tub of Blood," is bound to mortify me and Hawkins, too; an' most likely lead to the barkeep or somebody makin' remarks. So I concloods I'll hop outside an' round up my silver, an' then return.

"'"Excuse me," I says to Hawkins, "just you camp right yere with the bottle an' I'll be among you agin in a minute all spraddled out."

"'So I goes wandering out back of the "Tub of Blood" whar it's lonesome an' thar's nobody lookin' on bar coyotes, an' camps down back of a Spanish bayonet bush an' tugs away to get my boot off, an' my dinero into circ'lation.

"'An' while I am at it, sleep and nose-paint seizes me, an my light goes plumb out. I rolls over behind the bayonet bush, an' snores off to sleep. It must have made them coyotes stop an' consider a whole lot about whar I be.

"'Just to show you how good them coyotes is, I want to tell you—I don't notice it none till the next day—while I'm curled up to the rare of that bush they comes mighty near eatin' of the scabbard off my gun while it's in my belt. Fact; the scabbard looks afterwards like some pup not otherwise engaged has been chewin' it. But of course, bein' dead entire like I was from visitin' 'round so much, I ain't mindin' nothin' so oninterestin' as a coyote bitin' on the leather of my gun.

"'Now this is where that bluff about bread on the waters comes in; an' it falls all so pat on the heels of them devotions of mine that night, it he'ps burn an' brand it on my memory.

"'While I'm layin' thar too dead to skin from nose paint, and mighty likely while them coyotes is lunchin' off my scabbard that away; along comes a bad man they calls Spanish Bill. I learns afterwards how this Spanish Bill is hard clean through. He's rustled everything from a bunch of ponies to the mail bags, an' ain't reckoned nuthin' but a hold-up who needs hangin' every minute of the day.

"'Whatever takes him out to where I lays by my bayonet bush I never knew. He don't disclose nuthin' on that p'int afterwards; an' I've figgered more than once mebby he tracks up on me accidental.

"'But what informs me some plain that he explores my war-bags for stuff before he concloods to turn in an' look after my health is that later on when I onfurls my finances to him he seems sorter disapp'inted an' hurt.

"'When this yere Spanish Bill ropes on to me I don't know nuthin'. The statesticks furnished by the barkeep of the "Tub of Blood" next day goes to the effect that I'm shorely out thar four hours.

"'When Spanish Bill discovers me I'm mighty near froze stiff; for I'll let you in quiet and between us, those nights in November has a heap of things in common with them Arctic regions we hears of, where Franklin an' Kane an' the rest of that passel of fur-lined sports goes in pursoote of that North Pole.

"'So, bein' froze that away, an' mebby from an over dab of nose paint, I never saveys a thing about this yere Spanish Bill ontil hours afterwards.

"'But the barkeep says this Spanish Bill drags me into the "Tub of Blood," an' allows he's got a maverick.

"'"Fix this yere froze party up something with fire an' teeth," says Spanish Bill to the barkeep. "I don't know him none; but he's got to be recovered if it takes every chip in the check rack."

"'So the barkeep an' Spanish Bill stands in an' brings me to, so I can walk some if Spanish Bill goes along steadyin' of me by the collar. Tharupon said Spanish Bill rides herd on me till he gets me down to the Jackson House an' spreads me out on some blankets.

"'It's daylight when I gets around so I knows my name's "Boggs," an' I'm a native of Kentucky, an' little personal things like that. An' what wakes me up is this Spanish Bill; he's shakin' my shoulder.

"'"See yere," says this hold-up, "I'm goin' to turn in now an' yere's what you do. Thar's five whisky checks on the 'Tub of Blood' which will he'p you to an appetite. Followin' of a sufficient quantity of whisky you will return to the Jackson House an' eat. I won't be rolled outen my blankets by then, but they knows that Spanish Bill makes good, 'cause I impresses in on 'em speshul when I comes in.

"'"You don't know me," goes on this Spanish Bill, as I sets up and blinks at him some foggy an' blurred yet, "an' I don't know you; which we'll allow outen p'liteness is a dead loss to both. But my name's Spanish Bill, an' I'm turnin' monte in the Bank Exchange. I'll be thar at my table by first drink this evenin'; an' if you'll sa'nter that way at that epock as your busted an' ain't got no money, of course, I'll stakes you on my way."

"'It's this bluff about me not havin' money puts me in mind when my head's in better thinkin' order that this Bill must have rustled my raiments that time I'm presided over by coyotes while I sleeps. When he says it, however, I merely remarks that while I'm grateful to him as mockin' birds, money after all ain't no object

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with me; an' pullin' off my high moccasin I pours some two pounds of specie on to the blankets I'm camped on.

"'"Which I merely packs this in my boot," I observes, "to put myse'f in mind I've got a roll big enough to choke a cow over to Howard's store."

"'"An' I'm glad to hear it," says this Spanish Bill; though as I suggests he acts pained an' amazed at the exhibition like a man does who's overlooked a bet.

"'Well, that's all thar is to that part. That's where Spanish Bill launches that bread of his'n, an' as I states, it sorter bears down on me as a thought like a saddle that don't fit, an' keeps me feelin' an' rememberin' what that sky scout says at the prayer meetin' about the action a man gets by playin' a good deed to win.

"'It's the middle of January; mebby two months later when I'm over on the upper Caliente about fifty miles west of the Spanish Peaks. I'm workin' a bunch of cattle; Bar-c-Bar was the brand, an' the y'ear mark's a swallow-fork in the left y'ear, with the right y'ear under-hacked.'

"What's the good of a y'ear mark when thar's a brand?" repeated the old cattleman after me; for I had interrupted his tale of Boggs' troubles with the question: "Whatever's the good of y'ear marks? Why, when cattle is in a bunch standin' so close you can't see no brands on their sides, an' you're looking through the bunch to cut out what don't belong therein, y'ear marks is all you can go by.

"They all turns to look at you as you come ridin' an' pesterin' about among 'em, an' thar you get their y'ear marks like printin' on the page of a book. If you was to try an' go over a herd by the brands you wouldn't cut out a steer an hour. But to go back after Boggs.

"'I'm ridin' down a draw one time,' says this Dan Boggs, 'cussin' the range, which is bad, an' the weather which is worse—it's the hard winter I mentions when so many cattle dies an' I swears so much—when my pony goes to having symptoms.

"'This pony I've saddled—I has ten in all—is that sagacious that while it makes not the slightest mention of cattle when they're near, never draws up on deer, or people, or any body strange in the hills, but it takes to givin' of manifestitations so as I can square myse'f for whatever game they opens on us.

"'As I says, me an' this yere wise pony is just pushin' out into the Calient when the pony begins to act queer an' make signs. I brings him down all cautious where we can look out across the valley, an' you can gamble I'm some astonished to see a gent walkin' along a foot out mebby a couple of hundred yards. He sorter limps, an' leans over on one side, like he's hurt.

"'Nacherally I stops an' surveys him careful. It's plenty strange he's there at all, an' stranger still, he's a-foot. So I looks him over for weapons—I wants to note what he's like, an' how he's heeled.

"'You saveys as well as me it don't do to go canterin' out to strangers that away in the hills, speshully a stranger who's a-foot. He might want your pony for one thing, an' open a game on you permiscus with his gun, an' would leave you broke, an' too dead to know it.

"'I'm allers cautious around a man who's lost his hoss. It makes him cruel, crazy an' f'rocious, helpless, an' let out, he goes plumb locoed. A gent afoot is a heap easier to aggravate, an' a mighty sight more likely to lay for you than if he's safe an' solid in a Texas saddle with a Spanish pony between his knees.

"'Which is why I remarks that I takes in this pedestrian all car'ful an' stacks him up ackerate before I goes after him.

"'As I says, he carries on like he's hurt, an' he's packin' a six-shooter. He makes a sorter familiar figure, too, an' while I looks him over I'm wonderin' where I crosses his trail before.

"'As I has the advantage of a Winchester I at least rides out into the open an' gives a whoopee. The party turns, comes limpin' towards me, an' whoever do you allow it is?

"'Which it's shorely Spanish Bill, an' it's right yere he gets action on that bread on the waters he plays in when he recovers me an' releeves the coyotes that time in Taos, on which occasion disinterested people like the barkeep of the "Tub of Blood," offers two to one I'd shorely freeze stiff if Spanish Bill hadn't stood in on the play.

"'To make it brief, here is how it is: Spanish Bill tells me that after I leaves Taos he goes over an' deals monte a bit at Wagon Mound. One night a Mexican comes caperin' in, an' after Spanish Bill gives him a lay-out or two he makes a bet of fifty dollars on the queen—what the greasers call the hoss. The Mexican loses, an' instead of takin' it easy like a sport should he grabs the money.

"'As was his duty, Spanish Bill wipes him over the head with his six-shooter as a reason to drop the money. The Mexican tharupon searches out a knife, an' this so complicates the business Spanish Bill in an effort to simplify things, ups an' shoots the Mexican full of holes.

"'The shootin' was on the square, an' of course no one takes no hostile notice of it. Spanish Bill goes on laying out his monte cards same as usual. Two days later, though, he gets a p'inter the Mexicans are fixin' for him. So that night he moves camp, mebby it's 160 miles from Wagon Mound over on the Vermejo.

"'But the greasers hang to the trail, it seems; for the day before I tracks up on him, as he an' a side pard whose name is Hill, is ridin' along, a band of Mexicans hops outen a dry arroyo where they're bush-whackin' for 'em, an' goes to shootin'.

"'As might be expected, Spanish Bill an' his pard turns loose an' shoots back agin free an' frequent, an' near as I sees, they shorely enjoys a high, successive time.

"'They downs Spanish Bill's pony an' creases his side; which is what curves him over, an' indooces him to limp when I meets up with him. As well as he knows his pard charges plumb through; an' as Spanish Bill goes down with his pony, leaves him, allowing he's dead an' done for good.

"'Which it was this pard's turn to know that Spanish Bill's dead before ever he lines out; but he's weak or rattled, so he don't stop to investigate. Spanish Bill puts it up when he tells me the story, he's due to shoot up this pard of his'n for abandonin' him that away, if he ever crosses up with him. Which bein' as it should be, I fully approves tharof.

"'When this yere Spanish Bill goes down, the Mexican scatter likewise. They was shy two people with another plugged deep and good; all of which I hear afterwards; so you notes that Bill an' his mate is aiming low an' excellent.

"'It's only a half mile to a little ranch, an' Spanish Bill gets over thar as soon as he can, an' gettin' a pony an' saddle, which he easy does with his money, he breaks back into the hills, where we met. He's afoot, because that mornin' his pony gets tired of the deal an' bucks him off, an' goes stampedin' back where he gets him.

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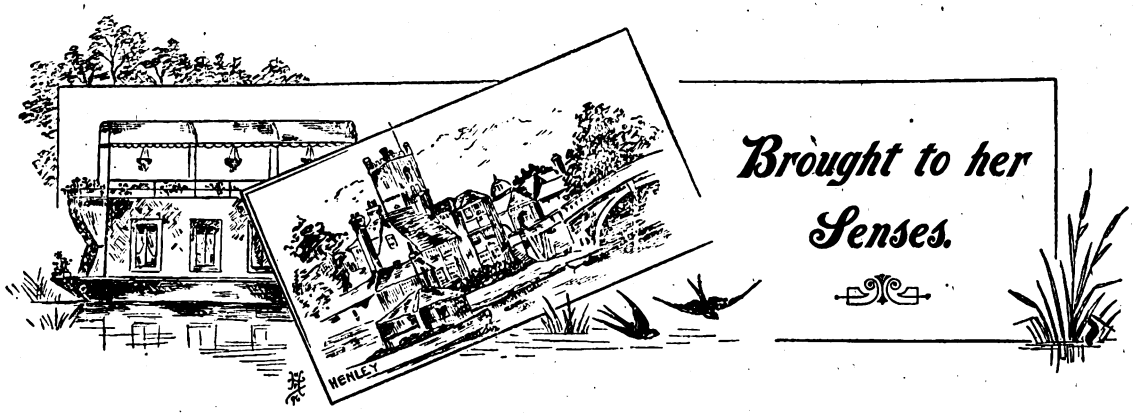
"'While he's talkin' I recalls how Spanish Bill rounds me up that night in Taos, so I don't hesitate. I takes him over to my camp an' fixes him up. The next mornin' he turns his nose towards Texas on one of my best ponies; which is the last I sees or hears of Spanish Bill—onless he's the Bill who's lynched over near Eagle's Pass a year later, of which I has no proof, but surmises it some likely.

"'It's after Spanish Bill is gone, I brings up again what that Gospel person says about doin' benevolences, an' how after many days you reaps a big winnin', an' lives on velvet for all eternity. An' don't you know this Spanish Bill pickin' me up that night, an' then in less than two months when he's afoot an' hurt in the hills, gettin' against me an' drawin' out of the game ahead a saddle, a pony an' safety, makes it look like that Bible sharp is right? That's how it strikes me, an' just as I tells you, if so many cattle hadn't died that spring, an' if I hadn't give way so frightful in my talk, I'd shorely trailed down a congregation the next June, an' got a stack an' stood in.'"



"GREG, are you awake?" calls a tumbled heap of femininity upon the sofa.

"I am." And a wreath of cigarette smoke floats above a masculine head lying comfortably amid a heap of cushions in the big armchair.

"I've just come across these old letters in my desk. I'm going to read them aloud."

"I'm at your mercy."

"I'll stir up the fire first. I want more light. There! Just listen to this, now:

"MY OWN DEAREST GREGORY,—For the last time I write you thus. Yes, indeed, it must be so. It has all been a happy, foolish dream, but now it must end. To-day, I release you from our engagement. A marriage between us would be most ridiculous. We are both so very young—too young to decide so important a matter; mamma says so, and I am sure she is right. We have had a long talk. Besides, your salary has proved too small for one.

"Now, dear friend, do nothing rash. Men do not die of love. Your life is not your own, so no experiments with laudanum. Do not come to see me. My mind is fully made up. I shall travel with dear mamma, and see more of this great world than I have hitherto known. Now write me a nice letter, and tell me that I am a very sensible girl. Be brave—no nonsense, and remember that I am your ever-devoted friend,

LUCY."

"That was a nice letter to read when a fellow was hungry!"

"Did you receive it before dinner? I might have known you did by your hateful answer. Here it is:

"MY DEAR LUCY,—You are indeed a sensible girl, and I am proud of my little friend's judgment. You were always a trump. My mind is much relieved by your decision. I have often thought that perhaps we were a trifle foolish, don't you know. I didn't like to say so myself, though. You will pardon the brief character of this note when I tell you that Tom Wayland is waiting for me. We are just off to the club to dine. By-the-way, that report in regard to his sister's engagement is false. She told me so herself this afternoon. And now, good-bye, little kitten. Be happy—bu of course you will. It is the warm wish of your friend,

GREGORY.

P.S.—Regards to your mother. Appreciate her. You may not have her always."

Silence.

"What a villain!" A sigh.

A chuckle from amid the cigarette smoke.

"What fools girls are!" from the sofa. "'Tis easy to forgive them for it—as long as they're pretty. Go on. Read your answer."

She reads:

"Sir,—I have heard before of the transient nature of man's love, but allow me to assure you that I have found yours more ephemeral than any yet on record."

Interpolated chuckle from the big armchair, and vigorous response of "Wretch!" from sofa. Resumes letter:

"As for Miss Wayland, I am glad somebody finds so much to admire about her. The poor thing never had any attention before. I hope you may both be happy."

Voice from the armchair: "She was a beauty."

Voice from sofa: "She was horrid. Great big, vulgar thing."

"Go on."

"Hum! Where was I? Oh, here." Reads:

"As for my mother, she inherits her worldliness. I have not spoken to her to-day. And now, good-bye—what a word! May you forget the ruin you have wrought in a young girl's heart! I shall pray for you always. May death soon claim LUCY.

"What a wretch you were!"

"A very clever wretch, I think."

"Was it a trick?"

"It was—and it succeeded."

MADELEINE BRIDGES.

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MY FRIEND SIR KIRBY HALLUM

THIS winter I am taking a rest after a round of gaiety and social activity which I never equalled before, and I doubt my going into the "swim" again next winter, or for some winters to come, for that matter. I am desirous to explain my reasons for this withdrawal from society, and in order to do so I shall be obliged to tell you of my relations with Sir Kirby Hallum.

You see, I have aways felt that it was in a sense my duty to move in good society, and I have been at some pains so to arrange my affairs and social relations as to be able to attend most of the better class of private entertainments given in London during the past two or three winters. It not only gave me no small enjoyment, but it also assisted me materially in my business.

It was a matter of considerable difficulty to secure an invitation to the Fitzwarren reception, but I managed it—no matter how—and it was at this reception that I made the acquaintance of Sir Kirby Hallum.

I had strolled into Dr. Fitzwarren's surgery to get out of the hot and crowded reception-room, and, in the dim light, was leaning against the window-casing, idly tapping on the glass with my nails, when I noticed at the top of the window-sash a bit of metal gleaming in the semi-darkness. I touched it, and found that it was a part of a burglar alarm, moving when the window was opened upon another bit of metal, and by contact completing an electric circuit of some sort.

I am something of an electrician, and my interest and curiosity were at once aroused. Without stopping to think, I unscrewed the upper bit of metal with my knife, and, after twisting off the wire which led from it into the woodwork, was examining it when I heard a light step at the door, and looking round, found standing by the table a tall, dark-skinned man in an evening dress, with black moustache and imperial, and long, rather curly black hair—in all suggesting at once the popular idea of his Satanic Majesty.

By one of those impulses which overcome us at all times, I slipped the bit of metal in my pocket and turned towards the stranger, whom from his dress and manner I assumed to be one of the guests at the reception.

"I hope I don't intrude," he said politely.

"Oh no," I hastened to reply; "I am glad someone else can enjoy the coolness here."

"I think I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance," the stranger said, smiling; "as guests of this house, I trust we need no formal introduction—my name is Hallum, Sir Kirby Hallum."

"And I am William Vance; very much at your service, sir," I returned, decidedly pleased with my new friend's voice and manner. "I am indeed glad to make your acquaintance, Sir Kirby."

I found Sir Kirby Hallum a very agreeable fellow; a gentleman of refinement and culture, polished, and well-informed, a ready conversationalist, though decidedly reserved as to himself, and a smoker of excellent cigars. We discussed books, yachting, horses, politics, et cetera, Sir Kirby showing himself a man of wide reading and depth of thought along many lines.

I could learn nothing, however, of his own occupation—he was especially reticent on that point. Sir Kirby casually let slip that he had been on the Continent until recently; his business had taken him there on two days' warning, and had brought him back as suddenly; he could not tell how soon the present matter would be disposed of, or where he would go next.

"I am an uncertain fellow," he said, laughing, "and never know my own plans two weeks in advance. Indeed, my plans are largely made for me, and I go and come usually at the bidding of others."

While we were talking, Dr. Fitzwarren entered, and I did not see Sir Kirby again that evening, for, while I presently returned to the reception-room, Sir Kirby remained chatting with his host.

I was decidedly ill at ease, for I had that piece of burglar alarm in my pocket, and could find no opportunity to put it back. I was fully aware that my hasty action might be misconstrued by one who did not know me, and I was anxious lest Sir Kirby had seen me take it down, though not in the most remote way had either of us referred to the subject.

It was no business of his, though, in any case, and I deemed myself in no way bound to consult him about so trivial an affair. Besides, I was inclined to think he had not seen me take the piece of metal. It subsequently appeared, however, that he did see me take it, and his actions were strongly influenced by the ideas this trifling incident suggested to him.

As it happened, I found no opportunity to approach the window again, and I went home with the bit of metal still in my pocket.

That night an attempt was made to rob Dr. Fitzwarren's house, the burglars entering by the very window from which I had removed the burglar alarm. They did not succeed in securing any plunder, being frightened away before any valuables were found.

Now this attempted burglary was similar to several others which had taken place at some of the finest residences in town, in each case following only a day or two after a reception or a ball similar to that at Dr. Fitzwarren's house. As it happened, in every similar instance but one, I had been a guest at the entertainment, and I had almost begun to fear lest the people who had invited me should regard me as a bird of evil

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omen, and cease to "request the honour of my presence" at their houses.

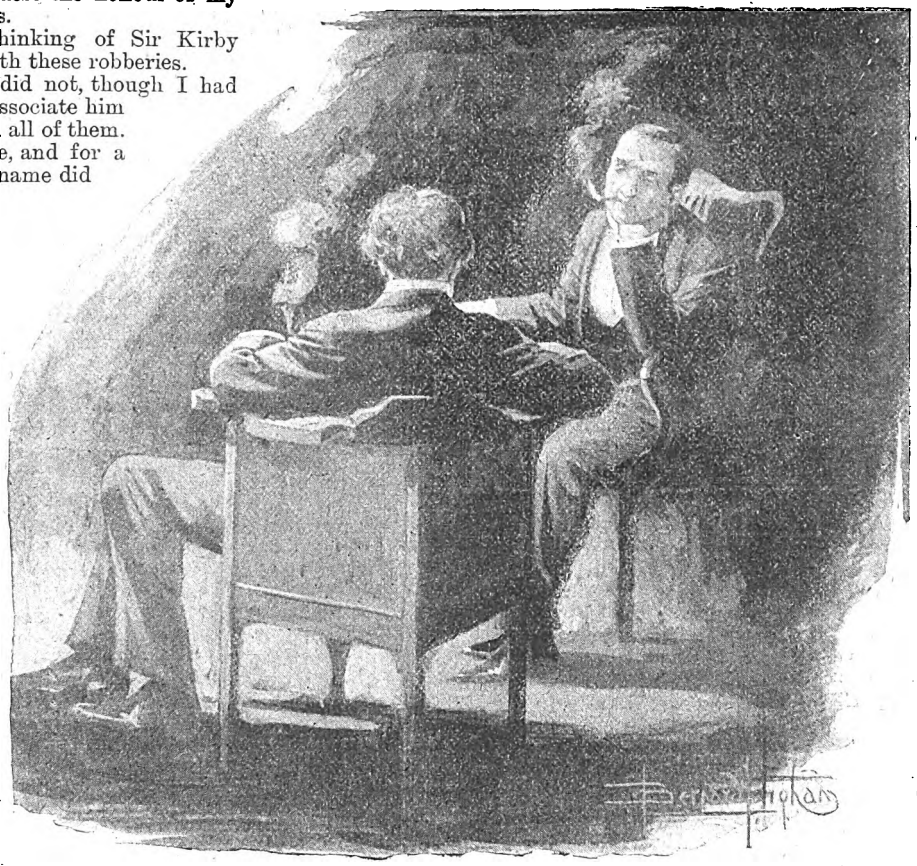
Probably you are thinking of Sir Kirby Hallum in connection with these robberies.

I must confess that I did not, though I had occasion afterwards to associate him more or less directly with all of them. I had met him but once, and for a short time only, and his name did not occur to me until two weeks later, when Lord Upton's daughter was married. At the reception, in the evening, I met the baronet again, sauve, polite, but, as before, suggesting Mephistopheles.

I encountered him a dozen times that evening — on the back verandah, in the conservatory, in the garden —till I began to regard him as my evil genius. Particularly did he hover in the neighbourhood of the room full of silver ware and jewellery which comprised the wedding gifts.

When I left the house the last person I saw was Sir Kirby, who went out with me and left me at the corner below, turning down a narrow side street with a wave of the hand and a cheery:

"Good-night, Vance."



I found Sir Kirby Hallum a very agreeable fellow.

I saw the baronet again that night, and it happened in this wise. The moon had gone down, and it was nearly three o'clock in the morning, when, with two friends, I stood in the rear of the ducal mansion, under the shadow of a large bush. I was still in evening dress, but I had a soft hat pulled down over my eyes, and wore a dark overcoat. In my hand I held a revolver, as did my two companions.

In pursuance of my project, it was only a minute's work to quietly open the door at the rear of the house and the glass door at the head of the stairs within. Two minutes later we were in the room with the wedding gifts. A dim light burnt in the chandelier, and at the other side of the room the figure of a man lay on a sofa. I slipped over to his side, and with my revolver close to his temple, signalled to my friends to begin their work.

At the first soft clink of the silver in the bag in which they were guardedly slipping the wedding gifts the room was suddenly flooded with light, and I heard an oath from one of my companions. I turned quickly, to see Sir Kirby Hallum and three policemen standing in the doorway. I had time only to see the baronet smile triumphantly and nod in my direction, before my arms were seized from behind, the weapon wrenched from my hand, and with sharp clicks of locking handcuffs I was a prisoner. Sir Kirby then spoke:

"Hardly expected to meet again to-night, eh, Vance? You tried that burglar alarm dodge once too often, let me tell you. Gentlemen, you are my prisoners."

As I before remarked, I am now taking a rest from my social duties. I shall stay at this institution somewhat less than twelve years, and there are eight indictments, I am told, waiting to be attended to when I leave.

HARRY ROGERS.

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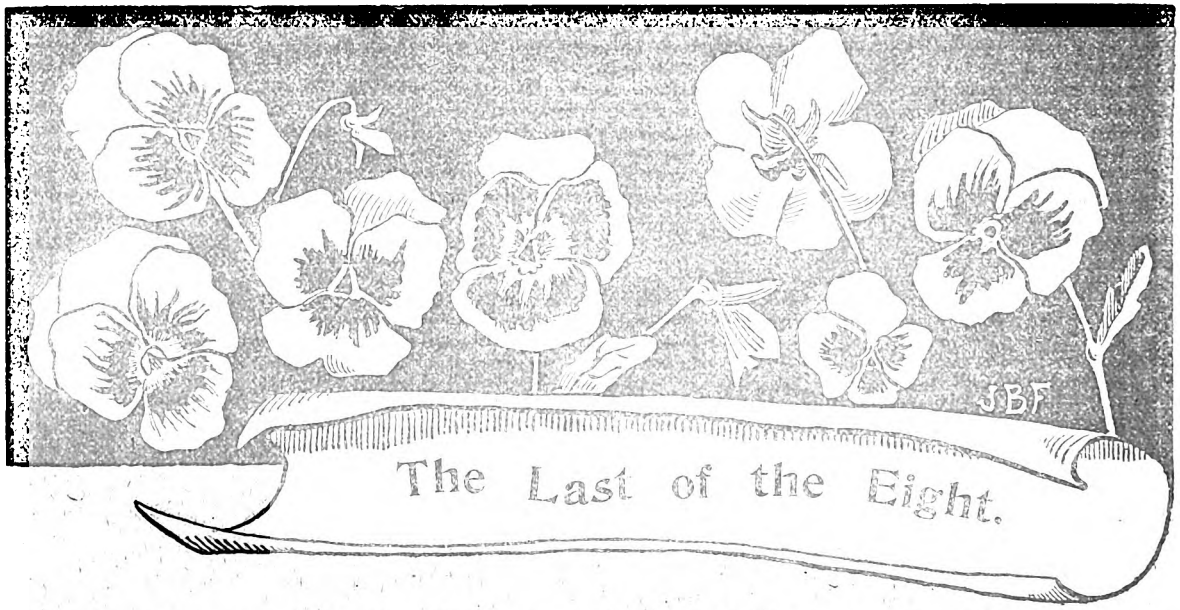

Ahmanzade Mehemed, the Sirdar of the troops of Tunis, was renowned for his extraordinarily severe discipline among the soldiers under his command. "Don't fear the enemy," Mehemed used to say, "only fear Ahmanzade Mehemed, your commander." And it is recorded as a fact that his soldiers did not know such a word as fear on the battlefield, but they trembled in the presence of their general, Mehemed.

The first war in which Mehemed was engaged was against the insurrecting Greeks in Albanus, and it was in this expedition that his troops first excelled. In this campaign Mehemed ordered eight cavalrymen to watch the five wells of Arta, a spot which the Greeks often visited. These eight soldiers had received strict orders to challenge every passer-by, never to close, as the saying goes, even one eye, and not to dismount on any consideration.

About midnight on the first day of their watch a driver of a waggon tried to pass by unobserved. When he saw he could not carry out his intention he left the waggon and his team of oxen and fled. The waggon was loaded with a cask, and, without dismounting, the soldiers succeeded in removing the bung, and they then soon detected from the smell that the cask contained brandy, an excellent beverage, most probably distilled from figs and raisins.

Mehemed's soldiers were not forbidden to drink confiscated liquors. They managed to get some reeds, which they inserted in the bung-hole, and began to suck the delicious brandy to their hearts' content. They never thought of the Prophet's saying that wine in any form was a wicked drink of Satan, and Satan soon saw that he had the soldiers at his mercy. First of all the soldiers were asking each other why they were sitting in their saddles when they could enjoy a much-needed rest on the lawn. Nobody would ever know if they were to dismount and to stretch their tired limbs on the grass. They could fasten their horses to the waggon, and nobody would betray them.

And they finally did lie on the lawn. The drink persuaded them to be still more incautious. Why should eight of them be watching when four would do just as well? And a minute later were fast asleep, and the rest—well, they tried to keep the watch, but not for long. The remaining four soon argued that two would be enough to watch, and Maruf and Sefer were left to guard the wells of Arta and their comrades.

"Let me tell you," said Sefur to Maruf; "one man would do just as well as two. What do you say?"

Maruf, being of the same opinion, answered—"Let us play a game of chess. The loser must keep the watch; the winner may rest." Sefer accepted the proposition.

The two drew a chessboard on the sand. They made chess pieces out of wild pears to represent the kings, wild apples served as queens, nuts, acorns, and other things served as rooks, knights, and pawns, and the game began. At first Sefer had an advantage, but getting rather mixed up, and not being able to distinguish the pieces, he lost his queen, and was about to resign, as he could not prevent a mate in two moves. Maruf interrupted the game by exclaiming: "You are in a precarious position, Sefer."

"Yes, I know," replied the latter. "I shall be mated in two moves. I could not play well, for I am almost asleep."

"Go on, then, and asleep," said Maruf. "I shall watch for you all."

An instant later seven of the eight soldiers were fast asleep. Maruf, gun in hand, was walking to and fro after the fashion of sentinels, principally to keep sleep away. After a while he decided to sit down on the lawn. He closed his eyes, thinking that he could rely on his ears if anybody should approach, and only a few minutes had elapsed and the eight soldiers were fast asleep.

The Greeks who lay in ambush, came forth, unfastened the horses, and would have certainly have killed the Turks but for the noise made by one of the animals when led away. Maruf was the first on his legs. In an instant the eight were standing in fighting attitude, but it was useless. The Greeks had mounted the horses and laughed at the pursuing Turks. Maruf's horse, however, made it hot for the Greek who rode it. The rider was

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thrown and the horse joined the eight Turks. One horse for eight cavalry-men!

"What will Mehemed have to say to this?" exclaimed the soldiers.

They knew that their lives were forfeited, but they were really more upset about the loss of their horses than about that. Sadly and timidly they returned to the camp, and, being brought before their severe commander, they made a clean breast of it. They related the story in all its details; how they had disobeyed orders by dismounting, how they fell asleep in consequence of taking too much brandy, how the two men had played a game of chess, and how they had lost the seven horses.

Ahmanzade never showed his feelings when about to speak. From his face they could not read the sentence which he was to announce, after he had listened to the story of the disobedient soldiers. At last he spoke:

"As there are eight men for one horse, seven of you are superfluous, for I never read in the Koran or in the Azorath that eight men could mount one horse. But as you are all good chess players, let a tournament decide who of you shall be the one to sit on the horse. The other seven will be shot."

He now ordered four sets of chessmen and boards to be brought to a specially appointed spot in camp, and then the eight men began a tournament in which their lives were at stake. Twelve sharpshooters were ready to carry out the sentence of death passed upon the losers. One or two weak players soon surrendered to their strong opponents; others got desperate and won their games by hazardous combinations. The four losers were at once led away, and twelve shots announced that they had paid the loss of the game with their lives.

The first round was over, and the four surviving players were now paired for another go. The excitement and the seriousness of the stakes seemed to prolong the contest. An ill-considered move, a loss of a piece or even a pawn, meant death. After a while the second round was over, two were taken away from the boards, and a few minutes later twelve shots announced in camp that two had ended their lives. Only Maruf and Sefer were left for the third and final round. Both men were known to be the best players in the regiment, and when they sat down to begin the game the excitement in the camp was at fever heat. A big crowd of soldiers was standing around them, and as the contest remained even for a long number of moves, as neither side was able to gain the least advantage in position, the spectators and players alike became so interested in the game that they forgot the seriousness of the stakes. The lookers-on nodded their appreciation when a good move was made, and discussed in low tones the position arrived at.

By-and-bye the battlefield became simplified, pieces were exchanged and pawns taken. Maruf succeeded in capturing a rook by a seemingly brilliant combination. Everybody now named Maruf as the winner.

Sefer, upon losing that important piece, studied a long time. Maruf, who thought he had the man beaten, did not look at the board—that is to say, his mind was occupied with other thoughts. Sefer did not move, but still kept looking at the position, and Maruf again directed his attention to the board. As he did so he became as pale as death, and he trembled all over. He suddenly perceived that, in spite of his numerical advantage of pieces, his game was hopeless. He saw not that if Sefer sacrificed his queen for a rook, he could then effect a mate by means of a bishop. "Will he see the combination?" Maruf said to himself. The answer of this question meant death or life. Maruf realised in an instant Sefer was aware of the situation. Maruf wondered why did he not make the move. But Sefer's thoughts were no longer given to the game, but to some other subject altogether. At last the silence was broken.

"Maruf," said Sefer, "how many children have you at home?"

"Four," came the reply, in a trembling voice.

"Your wife will shortly present you with another child?"

"Yes."

"Have you a good wife?"

"She is faithful and good," answered Maruf, while the tears were rolling down all over his face.

Sefer put his hand to his forehead, murmured something like a prayer, and asked for a dish of water. When this was brought he washed his hands and his face and addressed his adversary thus: "You have always been a good comrade. Last night you did not make me keep watch, although I lost the game to you." Then he touched the bishop and not the queen. A few moves later Maruf gave a check, the crowd of bystanders solemnly cried "mate" in a chorus: Maruf was proclaimed as victor.

Sefer got up, shook hands with his late antagonist, beckoned to the sharpshooters who stood in readiness, and two minutes later Sefer's noble heart had ceased to beat.

Maruf, however, remained at the chess-board. He stared at the pieces as if absent-minded, and later he tried in vain to place the pieces in a certain position. He placed black and white men into altogether impossible positions, and then he kept staring at the board.

"Get up," commanded Ahmanzade, who has been a witness throughout the tournament. "Mount your horse; your life is spared."

Maruf, however, did not heed the words of his commander; he still kept looking at the board, making all sorts of silly moves, and winding up with an outburst of laughter. Then he wept bitterly for a while. "How stupid these pieces look," he then said; "one is a horse, the other wears a turban."

"Lead him away," ordered Mehemed. Two soldiers took him away. Maruf stared like a madman. The surroundings seemed strange to him. He looked round, still absent-minded, and what he said was unintelligible. His last game of chess had made him mad.

MORITZ JOKAI.

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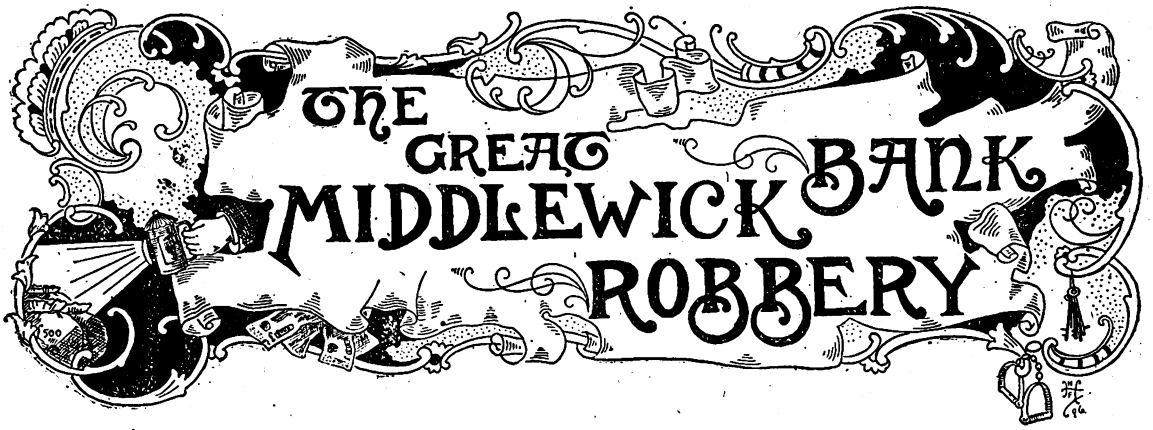

CHAPTER XV.

AN ADVENTURE AND A MISADVENTURE.

AFTER leaving Jack Burton on the afternoon preceding the last attempt upon the Middlewick Bank, his friend Taylor had strolled off in the direction of the hotel.

It will be remembered that a plain understanding had been come to between the two men as to the respective parts they were to play in the events that were then only a few hours distant.

It was growing dusk when Taylor walked into the coffee-room, in the doorway of which he encountered a man coming out whom he recognised as Roberts. Neither showed the least sign of recognition, and Taylor, for his own part, was convinced that therein Roberts was not acting a part.

In the most natural manner the detective turned and watched the criminal, who crossed the street and turned to the left. Determined to keep him in sight, Taylor did the same, keeping sufficiently in the rear to prevent his errand being suspected in case the other should look round or retrace his steps.

Roberts' course convinced his follower that he did not know he was being shadowed. The one in advance continued onward, turning several corners until he speedily reached the outskirts of the small town. This fact added to the delicacy of the work Taylor had taken upon himself, for both were soon practically alone.

Believing he was on the eve of an important discovery, the pursuer held back until he could hardly distinguish the shadowy form as it moved forward at a moderate walk. About a hundred yards ahead, to the right, among a clump of trees, the detective fancied he saw the outlines of a house. He had never been in that vicinity before, but like a flash he associated the building with the business of the man whom he was following.

He was right. Roberts turned sharply to the right, and came more plainly into view as he walked along what seemed to be the remainder of a path and disappeared in the gloom of the trees.

"That old building is the burglars' headquarters," was the detective's conclusion. "I wish my lord the watchman was with me, but as it is I'll investigate for myself."

Nothing would have been more imprudent than to follow directly in Roberts' footsteps. He and his friends were sure to be on the alert, and would discover Taylor the moment he turned to follow their confederate. Accordingly, the detective walked past the building, hardly turning his head when opposite, though it is needless to say he used his eyes to the utmost.

It was as he supposed. A low, broad stone building stood in the grove, a structure that had probably been built before any of the houses in the present town of Middlewick. It was unoccupied, except by the men who had taken possession while planning the robbery of the bank.

A short distance to the rear of the building wound a brook that was lined with trees. The stream was several feet below the level of the surrounding land, and, crossing the road, was crossed in turn by Taylor, after passing further along the highway. A little way in this direction brought the wooded hollow between him and the old house, thus affording the screen necessary in carrying out the plan he had formed.

Taylor vaulted over the fence, hurried along the edge of the wood, and in a few minutes was behind the structure that had assumed so much interest for him. He found that between it and the nearest point of the hollow was an open space of a hundred feet in extent. The grass-grown plot had to be crossed in order to reach the building itself.

A nearer view of the old stone building left no doubt as to its great age. It had probably been deserted for the past twenty years, and no doubt was in a dilapidated condition. The surrounding trees were so scattered that, despite their exuberant vegetation at that season of the year, the structure was seen distinctly.

Nothing, however, could be effected without a closer view. From where the detective stood not a sign of life was observable. All the windows were dark, and the stillness of the tomb rested on the scene.

Taylor was not the man to hesitate when once he had decided upon his course of action. With his head bent as low as possible, he ran rapidly and lightly across the open space and entered the grove immediately surrounding the old house. With the utmost care he made a circuit of the building, coming back to the point from which he started. The shadows gave him good protection, for the moon had not yet risen.

Not the slightest sign of life was observed during his circumnavigation of the mysterious building. That one man, at least, was inside, he was certain.

While still debating upon the right course to take, he heard the sound of voices. Taylor stealthily shifted his position in the direction whence came the murmur, and saw three men approaching from the highway over the same course that had been followed by Roberts a short time before.

There could be no mistake as to their identity; they were Joe Nash, Will King, and Sam Birch. They entered the broad, tumble-down front door, and then followed the sound of several voices in conversation, though nothing that was said could be identified.

Then a singular occurrence took place. A light flashed to view in the large middle room on the lower floor. It need hardly be said that the windows were without curtains, and most of the panes were gone. There were two windows opening on the right, and the same number on the left.

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On one of the other sides of the room a door communicated with the kitchen, and on the remaining side, with the broad hall leading to the front door.

Joe Nash found some sort of a seat at one of the windows on the left, and Will King did the same on the right. This, it will be seen, commanded every possible view of the outside and shut off any attempt on the part of Taylor playing eavesdropper by slipping forward and crouching under one of the windows.

Evidently the two had taken these positions to make sure that no one should steal a march upon them. Birch and Roberts kept away from the windows and nearer the middle of the room, since there was no occasion for them to help their comrades watch.

Only two alternatives remained to the detective, to enter the building from the back or the front. A brave man might well shrink from either attempt, for it was virtually entering the lion's den, with every chance on the side of the lion. But Taylor decided to take the risk.

Favoured by the gloom among the trees, he easily passed beyond sight of the watchmen at the windows, and approached the kitchen part of the building. An old door, with a single stone step, opened into this, the interior of the kitchen being in utter darkness.

A few minutes' examination revealed the old form of entrance. Instead of the modern latch or lock, a string dangled through an aperture that had probably been bored a century before. As in the days of our forefathers, a twitch of the latch-string opened the way into the building, while the door was locked by drawing in the string.

Taylor softly pulled the leathern thong and the latch was lifted. When he pushed against the door, however, there was no yielding. He tried it until convinced it was fastened on the inside by some other means.

Hobson's choice remained: he must enter by the front, or leave without accomplishing anything.

With a temerity approaching foolhardiness, the detective set about his perilous task. His action was almost a crime, inasmuch as there was no necessity for any such frightful personal risk as he now took upon himself. The programme for the evening had been made out. It was certain that these four men would try to rob the Middlewick Bank before the rising of the morrow's sun. The measures intended to defeat them had been agreed upon; it was not necessary to know more, to say nothing of the great risk Taylor ran of upsetting everything by his rashness.

With hardly a moment's hesitation he set about his task. Two broad, flat stones served as the steps to the front entrance. Here the massive door was ordinarily opened and shut by the old-fashioned iron latch, below which, on the inside, were the huge bolts and cross-pieces by which the entrance was rendered almost as secure as the solid walls themselves.

The criminals within might well think it unnecessary to lock the outer door. Surely no one would attempt to enter by that means, while any other approach would be detected at once. The rear being secured, they might well believe that anything they said was safe against eavesdroppers.

Taylor was on the alert for the sound of anyone moving within. If he could not avoid alarming the four conspirators, he could dash down the weedy walk to the highway, and thence in the direction of the town. The plotters would hardly dare to follow him, and if they did he was confident of surpassing their best efforts.

With the utmost care he raised the latch and held it suspended under the pressure of his thumb. So far as he could tell, not the slightest sound was produced. Then he pushed the door open. It moved backwards as if the hinges had been newly oiled. The darkness of the wide hall was before him, while a yellow line of light along the floor showed the closed door leading to the large room where the four men were seated.

He not only heard them laugh and speak, but distinguished several of the words that were uttered. It looked as if fate were favouring him. With the utmost care he managed to close the door as noiselessly as he had opened it. Although he was in a place he had never before seen, and with the impenetrable darkness on every hand, he had a general idea of his surroundings and of the right thing to do.

It must not be supposed that Taylor did not comprehend the risk he was running by his daring act. Sooner or late the four men would complete their council and leave the building, to do which they must come through the hall along which he was advancing like a cat. If they made this move suddenly they would be upon him before he could escape. In a conflict with four such desperate men he could have not the slightest chance. If he should attempt to run he would become the target for all their revolvers before he could reach the highway.

But Taylor indulged in some exceeding close theorising. Hours must pass before a move was made against the bank. Nothing was more likely than that the quartette meant to stay where they were until eleven o'clock, if not later. If for any reason they changed their minds, or had already formed a different intention, the listener would be able to gain ample notice of it from their conversation.

This was the theory that sustained him while advancing with the caution of one who feels that every moment may be his last.

When almost close enough to touch the inner door the detective stopped. He had gone so near that every word uttered was intelligible. He even withdrew a step or two towards the entrance.

As may be supposed, the conversation was extremely interesting to the man who had run all this risk to overhear it.

It was Joe Nash who said:

"It doesn't look as if a single person in the town suspects us. I've kept my eyes open ever since we've been here and seen nothing."

"Why should you?" asked Will King, "when it isn't to be seen. This is the finest job we've had for a long time. I was in the bank to-day, and had a good look at the safe."

"What sort is it?" asked Birch.

"The old-fashioned kind; it's as easy to open as a sardine tin."

"Do you s'pose there's much in there?"

"Enough to pay us, if we get hold of it."

"I came up last week, you know," observed Roberts, "and looked round. It took some time to learn what I wanted to know, but I found it out at last. Whom do you suppose this old hulk belongs to?"

The others could not guess.

"The old watchman at the bank. I met him the other day, when he was having a look at it, and got him to show me over it by pretending I thought of buying it. He said it was built by his great-grandfather, or some one, and that nobody has lived in it for twenty-five years. He's been trying to sell it for a long time, but no one will buy it at any price."

"You managed to get the provisions in here without any one seeing you, Roberts?"

"Oh, yes, that was easy enough after I'd learned all the ins and outs of the old building. I could stroll out this way after dark and leave a little of the stuff at a time. Besides, drinkables are more in our lines than eatables, so that made less trouble, you see."

"Especially when you carried most of the drinkables *inside*," was the facetious observation of Sam Birch.

"Of course I brought them inside, all of them, and I notice you've done your share in placing yourself outside them."

"Well, I think we can all plead guilty to that," was Birch's comment.

"Then," said Nash, "it is understood that as soon as the job's over we all come back here and stay for several days."

"You think that's the best plan?"

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"By long chalks; the news will be telegraphed to-morrow to London, and the detectives will be on the look-out for us at all points. They will watch the railway station, scour the country and hunt everywhere—except here in this old building in this old town."

"The safest place after cracking a safe," philosophised Sam Birch, "is in the house next door."

"We will keep out of sight; that is, all except Roberts, who mustn't clear off too suddenly, and then when the way is clear steal off one by one and come together, as we get the chance, at the Hole in the Wall."

Taylor, who did not lose a word of this edifying conversation, felt that he was being repaid for his risk.

"Roberts is the master of ceremonies," added Joe Nash, "and is used to the business, so he need not make any mistake."

"Suppose there's a slip to-night."

"*There won't be.* That watchman is the stupidest dolt I ever met; we won't have any trouble with him, and that's all we need fear."

"Shall we drink to the success of the scheme?" asked Birch.

"No," was Nash's prompt reply. "We must have no muddled brains to-night. You've got to stand watch, and mustn't see double."

"But after the job's over and we are here, what then?"

"Then will be time enough to drink to the success of what we have done, not of what is left to do."

"And we are to stay here until it's time to move?"

"That's the idea."

At that moment the listening detective fancied he heard the door leading into the kitchen open. The noise was slight, but it disturbed him. He stood a few seconds, hesitating whether to withdraw or stay. He ought to have gone, for surely he had learned sufficient, but the words of the party proved they intended to wait several hours, and, unfortunately, he decided to listen a little longer.

"It's tedious business," said Birch.

"D'you know of anything that pays better?" was the pert inquiry of Nash. "You ought to understand that one of the virtues of our profession is patience."

Just then the detective heard a faint disturbance at the door behind him. He turned his head, but of course could see nothing in the gloom, nor did he detect any additional sound.

"I've stayed too long," was his conclusion, as he moved with less care than before along the hall.

Seizing the latch he drew it smartly backwards. The door did not respond. He tried harder than before, but it did not yield the fraction of an inch.

Convinced of treachery, he turned to ascend the stairs, which his sense of feeling told him ran up one side of the hall; but before he could reach them, the inner door was opened and a stream of light swept over him. In the blinding glare he saw himself confronted by three men, each with a levelled weapon, and he recognised the gruff command of Nash:

"*Don't move!*"

Even while the words were uttered the outer door also opened behind him, and Roberts approached from the rear.

Taylor was fairly caught, and had no choice but to obey. He did so with that promptness which he always demanded from members of the criminal professions when he held them at a similar disadvantage.

CHAPTER XVI.

How Roberts made a Distressing Discovery.

By what means the four criminals discovered the presence of the detective in the hall outside was never ascertained. Probably he made some slight noise that betrayed him, for the descent upon the startled officer was so overwhelming, surrounded as he was on all sides, that he had no choice but to submit as a prisoner.

Taylor knew how to bow gracefully to the inevitable. He remained stock still, until Joe Nash—the others holding their weapons ready—stepped forward and disarmed him.

Having satisfied himself that the captive had no more weapons about him, they all returned together to the room where a couple of candles were burning on the broad mantelpiece.

Taylor walked to the middle of the room, turned round, and, with a smile, lifted his hat, bowed, and said:

"Good-evening, gentlemen. How are you all? I hope I see you well."

"Alfred Taylor!" was the exclamation of Joe Nash, who was the first to recognise the famous detective. "What are you doing here?"

"Awaiting your pleasure, gentlemen," was the imperturbable reply.

But this facetiousness was wasted on these men. They were filled with wrath that the interloper should have followed them to their chosen retreat. Each man held his weapon in hand, and the scowling, threatening looks they cast upon the prisoner boded ill to him.

"We don't want any nonsense from you. If you know what's best for you, you'll answer our questions truthfully."

"I can't answer them before they are asked."

"What brought you to this out-of-the-way place?"

"I saw my friend Roberts strolling in this direction, and having nothing special on hand, thought it would be interesting to follow him. I did so; came in at the front door, and employed myself listening to your entertaining conversation."

"How much did you hear?" demanded Nash.

Had Taylor attempted to deceive these men by pretending he had just come and had not caught enough words to give him any knowledge of their scheme, every one of the four would have known he was speaking untruthfully. It could not have helped him, and was likely to work him injury.

"I have not been here long, but long enough to hear, as I judge, about all that was worth hearing. I understand you have arranged to crack the vault of the Middlewick Bank to-night, and that you intend to stay in this old house until the hue and cry is over."

There was the whole thing in a nutshell. What more could they ask?

"What brings you in Middlewick at the same time with us?"

This was an important question, and, as will be observed, the detective's reply was straightforward, even though misleading.

"I was sent for to look into another matter."

"What was it?"

"That I cannot tell you, for it would be unbusinesslike. I pledge you my word, however, that it has not the remotest connection with any of you. You can well understand that, when I say I have been in Middlewick the best part of two days, and had no suspicion when I came that any one of you had ever been in the town. Indeed, it is less than two hours since I accidentally laid eyes upon Roberts."

The criminals were inclined to believe this statement.

"Well," said Nash, "we've got you here, and that bank is to be cracked to-night. What do you suppose we are going to do with you?"

Taylor shrugged his shoulders.

"I'd like to know myself, but I shall have to wait until you choose to tell me."

"There's only one thing to do," interposed Roberts, who in some respects was the worst of the party.

A suggestive movement of his pistol left no doubt as to his meaning. A word from the leader would have caused Roberts to carry out his own wishes, and he would have done it, too, with pleasure.

But here was the problem. To release the prisoner would destroy the scheme they had elaborated with so much care and place every one of the four in peril, for the detective would be certain to turn his liberty to the best account without delay.

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Taylor knew there was not one of these four who would hesitate to shoot a man in the way of self-defence, or when it became necessary to insure the success of an enterprise. Their previous history had proven that. There was only one of them, however, who was prepared to kill a detective when it was not absolutely necessary. That one was Roberts. He had followed his profession long enough to look upon all officers of the law as his mortal enemies. He specially detested Alfred Taylor, who had for months carried a warrant for his arrest and was suspected of holding similar papers relating to one or more other members of the party.

The question presented itself as to what was to be done with the officer to prevent his interfering with their plans. Taylor would have given his parole and respected it, but the ruffians were too suspicious to take any chances like that.

"Dead men tell no tales," added Roberts. "If you fellows are afraid to undertake the job I'll do it myself."

"Let me have my pistol," said Taylor, "and I'll be pleased to stand up in front of that coward."

But Roberts had no intention of settling the question in that fashion.

While Nash was as merciless as Roberts, he looked ahead. The disappearance of so widely known an officer as Alfred Taylor would be certain to be discovered sooner or later, followed by a strong probability that the crime would be brought home to them. That was liable to produce unpleasant consequences.

While the discussion was going on Nash took a candle from the mantelpiece, and said to King:

"Come with me."

He led the way down the stone steps to the cellar, the door of which was at the side of the room. Pausing at the bottom, Nash held the light above his head and looked round.

It was a spacious apartment, and, like most of the old-fashioned ones, wholly below ground. The two small windows, which lighted it by day, opened into little excavations dug on the outside, and neither window was large enough to allow any animal larger than a cat to crawl through.

All the walls were a foot in thickness. The only possible egress was through the door at the head of the steps by which they had descended into the cellar.

"What do you think of it?" asked Nash of his companion.

"It will do; it couldn't be more secure, but what about the door at the top of the steps."

"Some one will have to stand guard there."

"Who shall it be?"

"Roberts."

"But he'll shoot the prisoner."

"What of that? *We'll* be away when it's done."

"I understand," replied King with a nod of his head.

"All right. Then let's get upstairs again."

On their return to the room where Taylor and their two friends were waiting, Nash announced his decision.

"It won't do to let this young man loose till we've finished our business. The cellar looks pretty strong. Mr. Taylor will oblige by going down to the steps and staying there for a few days. In case he should be lonely, Roberts will stay in the building to keep him company and see that he doesn't get into mischief. Roberts, you're at liberty to do that as you think best. When Mr. Taylor returns to his friends he isn't likely to boast about this affair."

No, indeed; could the detective ever recall the episode without mortification? Never was an officer more perfectly checkmated.

"Good-evening, gentlemen, and may your scheme for to-night be confounded."

Taylor, hat in hand, bowed to the party, walked to the head of the stairs and coolly descended into the darkness below. His imprisonment had begun.

Roberts was disposed at first to protest against the leader's arrangement, for it eliminated him from all active participation in the unlawful business wherein such a distinctive part had been assigned to him.

But the scheme, after all, commended itself to him in more than one respect. In the first place, he was the most cowardly member of the company. He saw that if by any chance their scheme was overthrown, his position would be far more favourable than that of the rest of the party. His confederates were bound to protect each other to the last extremity, and, if the worst came to the worst, he could prove an alibi at the time of the burglary.

Then, again, he was to have charge of his most execrated enemy; that triumph was worth much. So he assented to the scheme.

The understanding was that the three men should leave the old stone house about eleven o'clock, each making their way to the bank by a different route. Birch was to take the lead, signalling to them as near midnight as possible if the coast was clear.

How this plan, supplemented by the complete overthrow of all their arrangements, was carried into effect is already known.

Thus it came about that Roberts found himself the only member of the party in the building, before midnight. He sat in the upper room, where he had been left by his companions with the candles burning and with his prisoner downstairs. He had given his own weapon to Will King, retaining for his own use the detective's revolver.

The door leading to the cellar, like all the rest in the old house, was much more massive and strong that is generally the case in houses of more modern style. It opened inwards, and was secured by means of a powerful iron bolt. Its position, protecting it from the weather, caused it to be much better preserved than the other doors.

The situation of the prisoner could hardly have been more secure. The single door by which he could escape was the one just mentioned. Since that opened into the cellar, it could be moved only by pulling it towards him. Thus assurance was made doubly sure, as any idea the detective might have of breaking it down by forcing it open with his shoulder was effectually done away with.

On the other hand, Roberts was at a great advantage. He was armed, while the prisoner was weaponless. It cannot be known what sinister designs assumed form in the treacherous depths of the miscreant's heart. Probably he contemplated an excuse for shooting the helpless officer, but was deterred by the fear of consequences.

Taylor's body might not be found for weeks, but one fact could be brought home to Roberts; he had visited the house a short time before the detective's disappearance, and represented to Warren that he was considering the purchase of the structure. Trifling as was this incident, it would be made to connect him with the crime, and he shuddered to think what the ultimate end of the other detective's work would assuredly be.

No; much as he might wish to put Taylor out of the way, he was afraid to do it. He would leave him in his underground prison without food or water, there to perish for aught his gaoler cared; but further than that he dare not go.

For fully half-an-hour the ruffian turned over in his mind a scheme for making a bargain with his prisoner by which the latter should pledge himself to drop all proceedings against him. The trouble about this, however, was that Roberts was powerless to offer the only terms the detective was likely to accept, since he dare not release him.

Roberts shrank from any attempt to take the papers from his man by force. Although a bigger built man than Taylor, he knew that his mode of life would give him the advantage. But the decisive point against the whole thing was that any papers obtained forcibly could not be of the slightest possible benefit to Roberts. Furthermore, it was likely that all documents which concerned the criminal were at the hotel where Taylor had been stopping.

It was natural that Roberts should feel curious as to the way in which his prisoner was passing his time in the gloom

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below. He could hear nothing, though he stood by the door several times listening for sounds from below.

He returned to his seat, lighted a cigar, and, looking up at the candles, awaited his friends' return. He calculated that this would not be for some time yet, as the bank job would employ them for some considerable time. At the end of three hours, perhaps, one or more of them would be back at the stone building.

It was now one o'clock, as a glance at his watch showed, and surely never had the minutes seemed longer. He assumed the easiest position he could in the unfurnished room, and, despite the many stirring thoughts which filled his mind, dropped asleep.

When he woke the morning light was shining through the broken window. The night had passed.

As soon as he recalled his wandering senses he sprang up and dashed to the door at the head of the cellar stairs. A second's examination proved it had not been opened, and showed no signs of disturbance. The iron bolt was in place, and Hercules himself could not have had forced it from the other side. Roberts listened, but all was silent below. Nevertheless, he knew his man was there, for he had not passed through the only avenue of escape that it was possible to use.

But what meant the absence of Nash, King, and Birch? They ought to have returned hours ago. Could anything have gone amiss? Roberts grew faint at the thought, but no other explanation presented itself. His anxiety became a torment to him. He peeped out of the window, but saw only a farmer driving along the highway.

He could stand it no longer. He must find out what it all meant.

But the prisoner below stairs—what would become of *him?*

Roberts knew of the two windows which let in a few streaks of daylight. They were too small to help Fagan. No; the door must be used, and that alone. The criminal now examined the fastenings once more. There was no way of making them more secure. In fact they were as strong as the entrance to the penitentiary from which he had had so much trouble in escaping several years before.

"He won't dare approach the door as long as he thinks I am on the watch," was Roberts' belief, "so I will let him continue to believe I am at my post."

This was easily done. He slipped out at the back of the house on tiptoe, and then reached the highway by a round-about course which precluded all possibility of the detective seeing him had he attempted to use the small windows.

Pulling himself together, Roberts walked as briskly as was prudent towards Middlewick, with eyes and ears alert. He did not have to go far before his worst fears were realised. The whole town knew of, and were talking about, the attempted burglary of the bank. All three of the men concerned had been captured, and were at that moment securely lodged in the county gaol.

"Heavens!" muttered the startling Roberts, "suppose I had been with the boys last night! They would have nabbed me, too. I think the best thing I can do is to make myself scarce."

But instead of yielding to this natural impulse, he mustered enough courage to stand his ground. Moreover he began stirring himself on behalf of his unfortunate comrades. He visited them in gaol, under the pretence of being a lawyer, engaged the services of the first attorney in Middlewick in the hopeless case, and left no stone unturned that promised the slightest hope.

Roberts was shrewd enough to discover one important fact. Taylor was not the only detective concerned in baffling the burglars. Some one besides him, and possessing greater skill than he, had taken a hand.

Who this man was Roberts did not know, though he meant to find out in the course of the day. Well aware that he himself would be an object of interest, if not of suspicion, he resorted to the common artifice of leaving the town, only to return stealthily later in the evening.

It was he who, prowling in the neighbourhood of Mr. Bryant's house, was attracted by Rutherford's movements, and held his home for a short time under surveillance, with no well defined idea of what he hoped to accomplish by that course.

Roberts' absence from town for the afternoon prevented his ascertaining the identity of the detective who had entrapped the burglars so cleverly, but he was certain of learning before the passing of the next day.

Roberts went back to the hotel and repeated his visit to Alf Taylor's room, and while engaged in examining the missing detective's luggage, discovered, though not by any means in the way he had intended, the identity of the second detective engaged in solving the bank mystery.

(To be continued.)

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM COMPETITION.

SECOND SERIES.

Of the thousands of competitors in the second series of the Brain Gymnasium, fifty-five succeeded in correctly answering every one of the twenty problems set. The amount offered in Prizes was £12 10s., to which we have added another 25s., in order that a fair division may be made, and each correct competitor therefore receives 5s.

As the problems were originally set in *The Story Teller*, it would scarcely be fair to the readers of *Short Stories* to occupy space in the latter paper by publishing a full key. Therefore, on this occasion, the solutions will not appear.

These competitions have proved so popular that it has been decided to continue them in *Short Stories*, and the first set of problems will appear next week.

The advent of this competition will in no way affect the continuance of the Picture Puzzle.

A postal order for five shillings has been forwarded to each of the following persons:

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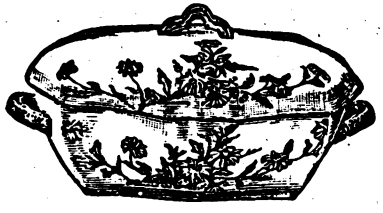

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So said the manager of a big London hotel to the writer not long ago. He was obviously right. There are no two sides to that question in the eyes of any sensible person. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. We all agree to that, yet how many of us habitually shape the principle into practice? Not many, I am afraid.

"I always keep a bottle of Mother Seigel's Syrup in the house," says a woman in a recent letter, "and if any of my family ail anything a few doses sets us right." Yes, she does *now*, but there was a time when she did not, and for a good and sufficient reason: she had not heard of it. After she heard of it, and found out its value, you could never catch her without it. The big apple of wisdom grows only on the tree of experience.

"Up to the early part of the year 1885," she says, "I had always enjoyed good health, and had no occasion for doctors or medicines. At that time I began to suffer from an illness which, after a little time, seemed to involve my whole system. My appetite at first was fitful and variable, and I had no proper desire or relish for my meals. After eating I had great pain at the chest and dulness at the stomach, as though what I had taken lay there as it might lie in a dish, without warmth or life.

"I was also much troubled with a sickening wind or gas that came up into my throat, sometimes in such volume that I could hardly draw my breath. Then I would have frequent attacks of sick headache, with a pressure upon the head as of a heavy weight. I resorted to every means I could hear of for relief, but the disease appeared to be too deeply seated for any medicines known to me or to my friends, so that I got to be more and more of a confirmed invalid as time went on.

"Not to weary you with the numerous details of my illness I will simply say that my strength continued to fail, and I eventually became so weak as to make getting about the house a difficult and exhausting matter. It was not until I had been in this condition nearly five years that a kind Providence placed in our way the means of recovery. In December, 1889, I happened to read in a newspaper an article about Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup and what it had done in a case very much like my own.

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A £10 PRIZE FOR PUTTING A PICTURE TOGETHER. (See page 460)

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 384. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 9TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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EDITED BY ARTHUR PEARSON OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY

SHORT STORIES

No. 384.] For the Week ending May 9th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

THE QUEEN OF THE ROSES.

PIERRE DUBOURG, the Headsman of the Luxembourg! It was a name of horror, overtopping the terror of the Reign of Terror, when men revelled in the shedding of blood, and women worshipped the guillotine, whose effigy they wore as a sacred ornament, replacing the discarded crucifix.

Like the prison, raising its ominous roof within musket range of the graceful, ornamental palace of the Luxembourg, Pierre Dubourg boasted a history as instructive as it was terrible. Prominent as was its headsman among the frenzied actors in scenes of revolutionary massacre, memory of his personal injuries and of the merciless avengement of his wrongs have been buried in oblivion, while the gloomy dungeon of the Luxembourg, whence emerged hundreds of innocent martyrs to meet an ignominious death, is suffered to survive, the monument of a nation's tyrannical zeal.

* * *

Towards the declining hours of the monarchy there was held in the environs of the frontier town of Varennes a rustic festival, at which congregated the youth, beauty and *bourgeoisie* of that pretty bourg, famed for the loveliness of its female denizens. It was a communal jubilee given at the expense of the Government, still managed by the local authorities, who took good care that the royal bounty should afford an abundance of the fat of the land, inasmuch as the Vidame chanced to be a wine grower, his subordinate a publican, and the remainder of the municipal rulers, butchers, grocers and bakers. Consequently, large as was the assemblage of revellers, they could eat, drink and be merry at the expense of the Crown.

Prior to the actual commencement of festivities had occurred one of those provincial ceremonies held in high esteem by the peasantry of certain portions of France, and attended by the minor gentry of the bourgs adjacent to the scene of their celebration. Of remote origin, these festivals were ordinarily known as the "Crowning of Rose Queens," damsels selected by the Church and presented to the Lords of the Manor to be enthroned and revered in public by their admiring neighbours as the most dutiful, respectful, and virtuous of maidens attending their first communion during the current year.

With the crown of roses upon her head, a sceptre of witch-hazel in her hand and a virginal girdle binding her waist, the monarch ascended her throne, surrounded by a bodyguard of liveried youth, there to receive homage from her subjects, whose loyalty was to endure until the day whereon the Rose Queen condescended to bestow her hand in marriage upon some suitor with whom, as a preliminary favour, she condescended to divide the honours of her Coronation Day.

Deposited the crown of roses upon the brow of Marie Duchesne.

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There was a blast of deep toned trumpets as the Vidame of Varennes deposited the crown of roses upon the brow of Marie Duchesne, while the tall beadle of the suburban church of Ste. Claire, garbed in his feudal uniform, waved the banner of the Blessed Virgin over her bowed head. Neither cheers nor other outbursts of enthusiasm accompanied this mute but impressive proclamation of virtue's triumph, and a dignified silence reigned until the Curé of the parish, after delivering a eulogy upon the domestic life of the fair elect, completed her exaltation by a fervent benediction, designed to strengthen the temporary monarch in her moral progress through life.

Upon a grass mound surmounted by the Rose Queen's throne was placed a chair, still not upon a level with the royal seat. It stood at the right side of the presiding sovereign, and so that the head of the occupant would be upon a line with his regal mistress's shoulders. It was vacant, still upon it concentrated the glances of all the lads and lasses in attendance as they craned their necks in anxiety to catch the first glimpse of its intended occupant, conscience-keeper of their Queen.

Marie Duchesne was a maid of eighteen, the daughter of mine host of the "Golden Swan," a posting-house on the outskirts of the bourg, necessarily patronised by all the travellers crossing the frontier into German territory.

The girl was remarkably handsome, better educated than most of her class, cheerful, of winsome manners, amiable disposition, and austere piety.

The sole child of the Père Duchesne, Marie would be entitled to a handsome dowry, a temptation to mercenary suitors, while her striking beauty and modest demeanour attracted a horde of obsequious adorers. To gain her hand had been the object of all the marriageable youth of Varrenes, who now clustered round her throne, the decisive moment having arrived when an invitation for one among them to occupy the vacant chair would be public announcement as to the conqueror of her virgin heart.

"Whom doth her Majesty please to summon as guardian of her conscience—as minister of state?" said the Vidame, with the air of a lord chamberlain.

Marie Duchesne blushed until her cheeks corresponded in hue with the roses of her crown. She had been called upon to perform the first act of her sovereignty and to be her life's destiny. Recovering herself, Marie, with maidenly modesty, whispered into the Vidame's ear, and that worthy magistrate transferred the whisper to the stalwart beadle protecting the throne as would a captain of the royal guard.

"Pierre Dubourg!" announced the church dignitary, who had lain aside the banner and armed himself with a halberd, upon whose glittering blade were etched the armorial bearings of the Vidame.

The female revellers glanced at each other in astonishment, then turned up their dainty noses, and finally subsided into derisive giggles, evidently affected to cloak some internal vexation. On the other hand, no sooner had their male companions heard proclamation of the happy couple than they broke forth into a hearty ebullition of congratulation, clapping their hands, tossing up their holiday hats, shouting and cheering at the top of their lungs.

This spontaneous demonstration of common satisfaction endured for many minutes with augmenting ardour, during continuance of which a stalwart youth, who had been timidly ensconced upon the outskirts of the crowd, was seized by his immediate neighbours and borne uplifted in their arms to be deposited at the foot of the throne, where he knelt, as in duty bound, to pay open homage to his queen.

"Arise, Pierre, and take your seat," quoth Marie. Dubourg obeyed, and the cheers were renewed.

After cessation of this ovation the leader marshalled the joyous crowd into a decorous procession, assigning rollicking cavalier to blushing damsel, and male escort to feminine loveliness in accordance with his own ideas of rustic etiquette. Then, waving his halberd as a drum major manipulates his *baton*, he headed the long line of her subjects as they passed in review before the queen of a day and her companion for life.

Pierre Dubourg was the blacksmith of Varennes, whose smithy was located directly oppose Père Duchesne's postal inn. He was a good-natured, kind-hearted fellow, more remarkable for his massive frame and herculean strength than either good looks or alluring manner. Hence the villagers wondered how Marie Duchesne, the belle of Varennes, rich, refined and personally attractive, could have selected such a mate, when hundreds of handsome youths had sought her hand.

But Marie carried her reasons for this preference hidden within her breast. She had watched Dubourg daily and unseen while labouring at his forge; she had conversed with him in her father's presence when, after cessation of work at nightfall, he was a welcome guest within the private parlour of the roadside inn. Marie discovered him to be industrious, provident, well instructed, fond of learning, and of a retiring, docile temper. Consequently she had selected him without his knowledge to be her future husband, and none among her admirers were more astonished at the declaration of choice than Pierre Dubourg himself, whose lips had never spoken a word of love when in her presence.

The Sunday preceding Christmas was the day set apart for the solemnisation of Marie's marriage, and during the interval elapsing Pierre Dubourg laboured night and day to earn the money necessary to purchase a suitable bridal outfit. "Marie," he said to his betrothed one evening as he was about closing up his smithy, "I have gained a hundred gold louis, and to-morrow I will leave for Paris."

"What for, Pierre?" inquired his betrothed.

"To buy your trousseau, my love," returned Dubourg, somewhat proudly. "I will spend the whole of it on you."

"That's kind of you, Pierre," quoth the girl, after a moment of hesitation. "But I have money of my own, and would it not be better to save yours, which we may want after we are married, dear."

"But how will you get your trousseau?" inquired the smith, after considerable reflection.

"I will go to Paris and buy it," answered the girl.

"You, Marie? You, alone in Paris?" returned the lover.

"Why, yes, Pierre!" rejoined the bride elect. "I have never seen Paris, and can buy such articles as I want while seeing the sights. It will save your money, Pierre, and be the better for me, as you cannot know what a woman wants. So I had better go."

"But it will not do for you to go alone," urged Pierre. "Paris is dangerous for an unprotected girl."

"I will not be unprotected, Pierre," interrupted Marie, somewhat petulently; "besides, I am old enough to take care of myself, and know that I will."

"Suppose I should tell you not to go," interposed Pierre, vexed at his betrothed's pertinacity.

"Then, Pierre," said the young girl determinedly, her bright eyes flashing fire. "I shall go, and you shall never

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see me again. I have father's consent, and I have no need of yours, at least, not as yet."

Pierre Dubourg was abashed and quailed before the girl's exhibition of firmness. It was the only time that he had attempted suggestion of his implied authority and was ashamed at his decisive repulse.

"When will you return?" Pierre inquired after a prolonged pause, during which Marie scrutinised his countenance closely to catch, if possible, a reflex of his thoughts, for Dubourg was in evident tribulation.

"Within a month, Pierre, at the furthermost, although it is a long way to Paris," returned the girl unconcernedly. "Still, you must not fret yourself should I be detained a few days longer."

"You go by the malle-poste, then, to-morrow?"

"No; were that so, I would not go. Now, listen, Pierre, how fortunate I am. You have seen the carriage belonging to that nobleman who came from the Court at Paris, standing under father's shed? Well, it's going back again, and the gentleman says that I can ride in it. Won't that be nice, Pierre?"

The blacksmith, lost in amazement, recovered himself after a minute or so of meditation.

"Does the gentleman accompany you?" he asked with an effort, for jealousy commenced dawning upon his imagination. "That would not be right."

"Oh, no, it will be right," responded the girl assuringly. "I go alone, Pierre, with the coachman and the lacqueys in livery, since the Count stops with a friend at a château two leagues from here for a month or so."

"Who told you all this?"

"The Count told father before he left."

"He has gone away then?"

"Oh, yes. He went this morning in his carriage with its four fine horses and golden harness. It did look splendid, I can tell you. But it will come back to-night, and on the morrow I will start in it for Paris. You are not sorry I am going, Pierre, in such a style?"

"No, Marie," said the smith, the tone of his voice belying his words, "if it pleases you. Only my heart tells me that you will never come back. Is it so?"

"What nonsense, Pierre! I'm sure to come back."

"You swear that you will?"

"I swear that I will," repeated Marie solemnly, and then throwing her arms round her lover's neck, and bringing his lips to hers, implanted upon them a fervent kiss. Disengaging herself, Marie Duchesne tripped lightly and gleefully in the direction of her father's inn, leaving Pierre standing at his forge lost amid the bewilderment of conflicting emotions.

* *

Six months had rolled by since Marie Duchesne departed from Varennes in all the vanity of a noble equipage with a pomp and ceremony worthy of a dame of Versailles. Four of these months were seasons of anguish and of lamentation to Pierre Dubourg, who marked the flight of time as the weary period of his betrothed's prolonged absence waxed longer and more unaccountable, with sighs and tears.

The simple-minded smith, unconscious of the artifices of a wicked world, placed full reliance in Marie's plighted word, and not a post chaise or lordly carriage rolled into the courtyard of the "Golden Eagle" unless undergoing keen inspection by his vigilant eyes, in the trust that it would restore to his arms one whom, by dint of unremittent mental contemplation, he had transformed into the divinity of his widowed heart. Pierre Dubourg loved Marie with an intensity of passion unknown to lovers in high society, and with a spirit of adoration elevating his idol beyond a mundane sphere. True, at the moment of her departure the artisan entertained no such exalted feelings; still, as in the loneliness of his situation he brooded over the prospects of a more congenial future, his affections concentrated until Marie appeared the solitary aim of his mortal existence.

Perplexed and wearied at his betrothed's protracted

Aroused by the noise of a vehicle approaching.

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"What do you want?" demanded the forest guard.

absence, Pierre Dubourg, nervous and anxious concerning the uncertainty of her fate, determined to solve the mystery by a journey to Paris. He disclosed his purpose to no one, not even to the Père Duchesne, who apparently interested himself slightly concerning his daughter's lengthened sojourn in the gay capital, then given over to libertines and *roués* attached to the court.

For three weeks Pierre Dubourg wandered through the streets of Paris in a vain search for Marie. He hunted the great city high and low, by night and day, until his limbs were fairly tired out with ceaseless promenades. He was upon the point of reluctantly relinquishing the search, when, wearied by an expiring effort, he seated himself upon a stone bench, placed against a garden wall surrounding an isolated villa upon the Cours de la Reine, the royal highway facing the Seine, and leading from the Tuilleries to the palace of Saint Cloud.

The disheartened, foot-sore and sorrow-stricken peasant, engrossed in meditation upon his untoward destiny, remained for hours in a species of stupor, when he was suddenly aroused from his reverie by the noise of a vehicle approaching the bench whereon he rested. The night was far advanced and somewhat dark, still, by the fading moonlight he was enabled to detect the outline of a lacquey who descended from the rear of the carriage, and seizing a tarnished metal knob projecting from the wall, extorted a deep-toned peal from a bell on the other side.

The sound of this alarm had scarcely died away before a ponderous, foliage-covered iron gate, almost concealed from view, turned upon its hinges to allow egress to a couple of servants, bearing flaming links extending at arm's length, who placed themselves beside the garden entrance in such a way as to render objects in the vicinity brilliantly visible.

Actuated by instinctive curiosity, Pierre Dubourg glanced at the vehicle, whose door had been opened by an obsequious footman to allow its occupant to descend, which proved to be a young woman. As she stepped upon the ground, a hood, with which which her face had been partially covered, fell back upon her shoulders, exposing her features to the full light of the links.

As he gazed upon the lady's face, Pierre was first amazed and then almost petrified. It was Marie Duchesne, whose features were too familiar to his memory not to be instantly identified. The lover was tempted to advance and throw himself into the arms of his betrothed. Still an unaccountable and irresistible force seemed to have paralysed his frame, riveting him, without power of motion, to where he stood. Impelled to uplift his voice and apprise her of his presence by calling her name, his tongue refused its office, and before he could recover from stupefaction, the lady passed within the garden gate. She was followed by her torch-bearing domestics, and the gate, swinging to behind them, interposed a barrier between Pierre and the vanished girl.

On the morrow Pierre Dubourg threaded his way with no little difficulty, being a stranger to the aristocratic faubourgs of the capital, to the scene of his previous night's adventure. Fortunately for him, a succession of mishaps and delays retarded his arrival before the foliaged gate until late in the afternoon, otherwise he would have found the tenants of the villa invisible to an ordinary visitor.

Pierre, discovering the metallic knob, gave a violent pull, causing a reverberating alarm. To this authoritative summons a gorgeously dressed *chasseur* responded, opening a small door inserted in the wall.

"What do you want?" demanded the forest guard sharply.

"To speak with the lady of this house," replied Pierre Dubourg, as he forced his way into the garden.

"You do not trespass thus," rejoined the *chasseur*, interposing his burly person to block Pierre's further passage. "Begone, beggar, or I'll kick you out."

"I have come to see the lady, and I will see her," replied Dubourg, with an air of serious determination.

"Out! I tell you, tramp!" ejaculated the domestic, and he seized Pierre firmly by the shoulders.

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"Hands off, and let me pass," said the peasant, as he disengaged himself from the *chasseur's* grasp.

"Out! out!" shouted the forester, as he again laid violent hands upon Pierre.

But the man, muscular as he was, had reckoned without his host. Pierre Dubourg, hardy from toil, agile from daily exercise, and the most skilful wrestler of Varennes, where men are born gymnasts, instantly closed with his liveried assailant, and before he was thoroughly aware of the folly of his rashness, the fellow was whirled into the air and dashed prostrate upon the ground with such violence as to extort an agonising howl of pain and anguish.

Attracted by noise of this turmoil a young female appeared at a window overlooking the entrance to the villa, and inquired in evident trepidation:

"François, what is the meaning of this disturbance?"

"It is I, Marie Duchesne; it is I, Pierre Dubourg!" shouted the provincial, assured at the girl's identity.

"What do you want with me, Pierre Dubourg?" demanded the young woman, recovering her composure.

"To speak a moment with you in private."

"François, admit the man."

The *chasseur*, aching in every bone from the violence of his fall, reluctantly obeyed the commands of a mistress he dared not offend, by leading the way into the villa and introducing the unwelcome visitor, after passing through several richly furnished apartments, into an exquisitely decorated boudoir.

Carelessly lounging upon a velvet-covered couch reclined Marie Duchesne, habited in a silken morning gown, trimmed with Flemish lace, her face pale and seemingly careworn, her hair falling in negligent tresses, and her eyes slightly devoid of lustre. She was indeed the ex-Queen of the Roses, but, alas, not the bright, etherial creature gleaming upon the day of coronation.

"Pierre Dubourg, your business with me?" commenced the girl, with a calmness and deliberate chilling the reviving passion of her visitor.

"I have hunted long for you, and now I have found you," responded the artisan while tear-drops oozed from beneath his eyelids. "I claim you for my bride."

"Pierre Dubourg," said the girl, with emphasis upon each word. "I chose you to be my intended husband of my own free will, and of my own free will I have discarded you. Let us not part in anger, for we shall never meet again."

"Never again!" repeated Pierre aghast.

"Never again," rejoined Marie, "our journey through life lies through different roads. Now depart."

"Depart!" ejaculated the smith. "Am I a dog to be driven from your sight. I will not depart!"

"You will!" uttered a deep-toned voice from the bottom of the boudoir, as the hangings were moved aside from a cabinet door to allow the entrance of a new actor upon the scene. "This lady has given a final answer. Your presence pollutes the atmosphere. Begone, sir!"

"And who are you, my cocksparrow, who dare order me from the possession of my own?" cried Pierre, hurling a glance of vindictive defiance at the speaker.

"I am the Count de Fersen, at your service," replied the intruder, a handsome man of commanding appearance, wearing an embroidered court dress, emblazoned with the cross of St. Louis. "Furthermore, I am that lady's protector——"

"Protector!" interrupted Pierre Dubourg, with an unearthly yell. "You have ruined her body and soul! Have now your just and well-earned reward."

With a sudden dash, Pierre threw himself upon the nobleman, and before the Count could comprehend his intention, dealt him a blow upon the cheek, sending him staggering across the room.

Marie Duchesne shrieked and swooned. The Count successfully recovered from the effects of the assault, and going to the table, whereon lay an unsheathed rapier, presented the weapon's point at Dubourg's breast. "I could slay you," said the Count, stamping his foot three times, "but this blade shall never be stained with a plebian's blood. Your punishment will come at the hands of my servants, fellows of your kind." As he spoke four stalwart valets filed into the boudoir, the herculean *chasseur* at their head.

"François," said the Count, "let this vagrant be flogged off my grounds. He has dared to strike your master."

* * * * *

Ejected from the villa and cast into the muddy roadway, humiliated, scourged, and covered with bleeding wounds, Pierre Dubourg knelt and swore eternal vengeance upon the aristocracy of France. On the morrow he departed for Varennes a heartbroken man. Three years passed away, and during that interim radical political changes had been wrought in France, whereby the power of the aristocracy was on the wane. One day a lumbering travelling coach occupied by a plainly

Presented the weapon's point at Dubourg's breast.

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dressed portly man, two handsome ladies and a couple of children drove up to Dubourg's smithy, as a horse had dropped a shoe. The coachman entered the shop to give orders to the smith.

Pierre Dubourg's keen eyes were at once fastened upon the man, and detected, despite his disguise, the features of his enemy—the Count de Fersen.

"Scoundrel!" growled Pierre, as he tossed aside the pretended coachman's wig and grasped him by the throat with the tenacity of a vice, "it is my turn now.

"Père Duchesne, behold the Count de Fersen, the lover of his queen, Marie Antoinette, and the moral murderer of your daughter, our Queen of the Roses."

"Down with the aristocrat!" shouted the villagers in a common chorus.

"And who are these in the carriage yonder for whom you, a peer of France, act as a coachman?" demanded Pierre Dubourg of his prisoner.

"The royal family of France," returned the Count, "whom I would serve in any capacity."

Grasped him by the throat with the tenacity of a vice.

I will not dash out your brains, for a smith's hammer shall not be defiled by the blood of an aristocrat. So, Count, I shall hand you and your companions over to the people that they may mete out the punishment deserved."

Through exercise of main strength Pierre Dubourg dragged his captive over the roadway to the "Golden Eagle," where were congregated loitering gossips and village notables. Summoning Père Duchesne to the inner door, the smith addressed him in a voice of thunder:

"Then die with them on the scaffold," sneered the smith, "and remember that I will be there to see the will of the people done."

Pierre Dubourg was not false to his promise. During the Reign of Terror he became executioner of aristocrats confined in the various prisons, from the chief of which he derived his title, the Headsman of the Luxembourg.

LE VIER.

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An Averted Scandal.

"WELL, here we are at last!" said my travelling companion, as the train slackened speed and pulled up at the little station called Oak Grove.

"Yes, here we are at last," I replied ill-humouredly, as I gathered up my belongings, for the train was three hours behind time, having been kept waiting all that while in a siding, owing to the breakdown of a mineral train, which had completely blocked both lines. "Good-night—or rather, good-morning," I added, a little more graciously, as I alighted, "a safe and pleasant journey to you. Thank goodness I have reached my destination."

Some ten days before, I, junior partner in the firm of Martin Bros. and Son, had accepted a pressing invitation from my old college chum, Gus Thwaites, to spend at least a part of my vacation at his father's country house, "The Larches," near Oak Grove.

Mr. Thwaites, senior, and his comely and motherly wife, were noted for their hospitality, and for the charming young society which they loved to gather about them. Often before had I been a participator in these merry gatherings, and, nothing loth, had set out to renew the pleasant associations.

But the welcoming greetings were scarcely over, and our plans of amusement were still unsettled, as the expected guests had not yet all assembled, when I was recalled hastily to town, on affairs unnecessary to mention here. Gus took me down to the train in his own trap, and his last words were:

"It's a provoking shame, old fellow; but cut it as soon as you can, and I'll meet you whenever you say the word."

With this the train whizzed off, and I turned my thoughts to London, where I arrived in due time, and devoted myself to the unreasonable business emergency with such success, that on the fifth day I sent word to Gus to be ready to meet me by the 9.30 train.

And now the 9.30 had become the 12.30 and a little more, and, of course, my friend must have gone home in disgust long ago; and here was I at a country station, four miles from "The Larches," time nearly one o'clock in the morning, with the surrounding neighbourhood in slumber.

Of course, there was no chance of a conveyance of any kind, and no place to put up at till morning. There was nothing to be done but to "foot" it along the country road, which I accordingly set out to do.

It was not an unpleasant walk, in the cool, dewy, summer night, with the stars twinkling peacefully overhead; but I must confess to being rather weary, and heartily glad when I drew near to "The Larches," and beheld once more the comfortable residence of my friend, now wrapped in profoundest quiet.

Until this moment, the question of gaining entrance had not arisen in my mind. Accustomed as I was to living in London, where light and noise are continual by night as well as by day, I had not pictured to myself the intense silence and repose of a country home at midnight, and I involuntarily quailed at the thought of disturbing so peaceful a household.

However, unless I determined to pass the intervening hours in the summer-house, among the damp creepers and blossoms, the deed must be done. So, walking briskly along the long gravel paths, I was about to ascend the steps——

"Ur-r-r-r!"

I stopped. What was that?

"Ur-r-r-r!" and, with a mighty dash, on came a great dog, his hair bristling, and his teeth glistening ominously.

I retired in haste.

After running a little distance, I noticed that he did not follow me, though he still growled threateningly.

I paused for investigation, and then, hearing a smooth, sliding noise, and coupling it with the fact that he did not come after me, conjectured that he was probably fastened to a chain, thus allowing him only a certain range.

Assured of this, I ventured back. My supposition proved to be correct. His beat extended across the front of the house, and, if I could get round beyond him, and crawl upon the extreme end of the verandah, I might thus reach the door bell.

This I tried to do; but I had not counted upon the lateral sweep of his tether, and, almost before I was

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aware of it, he was again in most unpleasant proximity to me, and still uttering those deep growls.

"Dash it all!" I thought, "if only he would bark and rouse somebody, instead of keeping up those insane growls!"

But my objurgations had no effect on the dog, so I again retired—this time to consider.

After all, why wake the whole house by an alarm at this unearthly hour? I knew just where my room was—Gus and I had always occupied the south-eastern chamber in company; and I knew, too, how I could get in, as we used to of old, when returning from some boyish lark and wishing to gain our beds unperceived.

There was a tiny dressing-room with a window opening from this room, and beneath that was an old-fashioned bay-window, with a permanent trellis on one side. By the aid of this and of the water-pipe, it was easy work for a boy to "swarm up"—as we elegantly expressed it—to the top of the bay-window, and, once in the dressing-room, the way was clear.

True, I was somewhat heavier now than I was at that time, but I trusted that my superior agility—resulting from a long course of gymnastics—and also my intense desire to escape from my uncomfortable situation, would enable me to perform the feat.

So I circled the house in the rear, and, removing my superfluous clothing, fastened it to my shoulders, and began to climb.

After a few slips, and some giving way of the trellis, I stood on the roof of the bay-window, and found, to my great joy, that the dressing-room window was open, though the shutters were closed. It was not a very hard task to force these open, and, in a few minutes, I stood safely in the dressing-room.

Now to surprise Gus!

I opened the communicating door very softly, and peeped in.

The room was indistinctly visible in the soft, summer twilight, and I stopped a moment to reconnoitre.

There was the bed, evidently disturbed, but there was nobody in it; there were the familiar table, wardrobe, mirror, etc. But what were those things lying on a chair? A dim mass of white and parti-coloured drapery, for which I knew no name or use. Queer, wasn't it? And where was Gus?

I heard footsteps—that must be he. I had it; he had been roused at last by the dog, and had been on a tour of exploration. Why couldn't he have gone before, and saved me all this anxiety? Well, I'd give him a good scare, to pay him off.

Just as I came to this conclusion, the outer door of the bedroom slowly opened.

I was still peeping through the crack of my door, expecting to see the dishevelled figure of my friend, and enjoying a quiet chuckle at his prospective discomfiture. So, making the opening a little wider, I put out my head.

Lightning never moved faster than I whisked it back again.

Ye gods and little fishes! Had I suddenly gone insane? Instead of the somewhat robust form of my friend, in a hasty nocturnal attire, my eyes had rested upon a tall, slender, female figure, in a long rose-coloured gown, and with golden hair flowing far down its shoulders.

Visions of screams and hysterics and fainting-fits, and I know not what, flashed across my mind as I squeezed myself behind the door, scarcely daring to breathe.

After all, I could retreat the way I came. I was no worse off than before, and it must be near morning. So I resolved to withdraw in good order; but, before going, I could not resist taking another peep.

The fair apparition had advanced to the table, placing thereon the lamp and a glass of water which she had carried, the latter probably explaining the cause of her nocturnal ramble; and having seated herself before the mirror, was engaged in coiling up her flowing tresses, preparatory to re-seeking her couch.

Of course, I refrained from further investigation, and drew near the window, to be in readiness to commence my descent as soon as the lady should fall asleep.

Half-an-hour, perhaps, of stillness, and darkness elapsed, interrupted only by the rustling of leaves without, and gentle, regular breathing within the next room.

It was now nearly morning. And I almost expected to see the gleams of dawn as I climbed out upon the roof. But no; all was favourable, and I prepared to descend.

"Ur-r-r-r!"

Did I fancy I heard that beastly dog again?

"Ur-r-r-r!" in unmistakable and vigorous tones from below.

I peeped over.

That confounded dog has broken his chain, and there he was, waiting below, ready to seize me the moment I came within reach. I resolved to postpone my descent.

Was ever mortal in such a predicament? I sat down upon the window-sill and pondered. What was to be done?

Which was worse? to be surprised by daylight, on the roof of the bay-window, watched by the dog like a burglar, or to hide in the dressing-room, at the risk of being discovered by the lady?

Clearly the former was the less ignoble course; only, as the window led to the lady's chamber, what explanation could I give of my presence on the roof, that would not also involve the delicacy of the lady?

The case was desperate. I could come to no conclusion.

Still the old watch-dog, true to his name, stood guard below, perfectly silent, except when I made some movement. And now a few faint streaks of light illumined the horizon. I must do something, and immediately.

A sudden inspiration seized me; I must not be found on the roof by the servants; I could not hide in a lady's dressing-room. But the lady was sleeping—she probably would remain so some time longer; could I not steal softly through her room without waking her, conceal myself in the drawing-room till the servants were astir, and then step out at the hall door? The dog would certainly relax his vigilance as soon as the family were awake.

This I resolved to do, so slipping on my coat and vest, I took my boots in my hand, and started on my perilous way.

I softly crossed the dressing-room, opened the door without a creak, stole noiselessly over the thickly-carpeted floor of the chamber, glancing neither to the right nor to the left, till I reached the door. It was fastened, but the key was in the lock.

Just as I put my hand upon it I heard a slight movement.

All wrought up, and nervous as I had become, I could not repress a start, and—horror! I dropped my boots!

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It was all over! Involuntarily shutting my eyes, I turned and nerved myself for the impending scene, expecting heartrending shrieks, and subsequent alarm of the household, with all the contingencies that flashed through my brain like wildfire.

Perfect silence!

I opened my eyes. The lady was sitting bolt upright in her couch, and no marble statue could be whiter than she, nor stiller—she was literally paralysed with fright.

The glow of coming day now pervaded the room, and I knew that action must be prompt; so, scarcely knowing what words I used in my extremity, I began:

"I beg your pardon, madam—I entered the room, thinking it vacant. It used to be mine. I will retire——"

Here excitement, fasting, want of sleep, and, above all, my dreadful situation overpowered me, and I sank into a convenient chair gasping for breath.

My forlorn state acted as a restorative to the lady, and a lovely flush crept over her face as she replied, gently, but firmly:

"Sir, I cannot understand this, but I do not wish you to remain for an explanation. If what you say is true, you will immediately withdraw."

Her words were, in turn, like a tonic to me; I suddenly grasped the offending boots, threw open the door, and stood in the hall, but not before I had taken a parting glance at the lovely vision, with its fluffy white draperies and the rosy flush on the fair face.

My troubles were not yet over, however; for, unless I could safely pass through the outer door and present myself from without, I must give some explanation of the manner of my entrance: the truth I should never utter without the consent of the beautiful unknown.

I heard the servants moving about below; I heard old Jim, the gardener, calling the dog, and exclaiming over his broken chain; then came steps in the lower hall, and the unbolting and throwing-open of the front door.

I peeped over the balustrade. None of the family were yet down; and, as the footsteps retreated to the dining-room, I again took up my line of march, and, with a skill rivalling the most expert of housebreakers worked myself noiselessly down the stairs, and at last, —glory to the gods!—I stood on the outside.

I saw nothing of my old enemy, the dog, so I sat down on the steps, drew a long breath, and then put on my boots.

After regaining a little composure, I stepped boldly up to the door and rang the bell.

Satisfying the surprise of the maid with a few explanatory phrases, I asked for young Mr. Thwaites.

"You'll find him in the little hall chamber, sir, if you like to go up; we've had so many visitors that he gave his room to Miss Rossiter."

The mystery was explained. So it was Mabel Rossiter whom I had encountered.

I had heard her praises sung by every member of the Thwaites family, ever since she was in pinafores and I in jackets; but, owing to her having spent much time abroad with her parents, I had never chanced to meet her. And now—ye fates! what a meeting!

Thinking thus, I tapped at Gus's door. It was opened by my friend.

"Jupiter Olympus!" was his salutation. "Where did you come from? I should think you'd walked all the way from London, by the general 'all-gone-a-tive-ness' of your looks."

"Don't say a word, Gus," I intreated; "I'm tired to death. We had to wait three hours in a siding, owing to a breakdown on the line; and though I didn't walk from town, I did from the station, a little after midnight, and have been prowling about ever since."

Which was literally true, though I did not deem it necessary to state where I had been prowling.

"Why on earth didn't you rout us out?" asked Gus, rather emphatic in his disgust. "The idea of hanging about the outside of the house all night, when there were good beds and a warm welcome inside!"

"Yes, why didn't I?" I retorted, in the utmost indignation. "Ask that confounded and utterly abominable dog of yours why I didn't. A pretty fellow he is, to have on the premises of a respectable householder! Keep him out of my sight after this, if you want to keep him at all!"

Gus laughed.

"There, never mind, old boy; you're tired and cross, and no wonder. Here, just tumble into bed, and you shan't be disturbed for a week."

But I was in no mood for sleep.

"I'll take a wash, Gus," said I, "and lie down till breakfast; for I can't sleep, and some good hot coffee will set me up again."

"All right," said Gus, and, finishing his toilet, he left me to repose.

I had said truly that I could not sleep. Thoughts of my night's adventure, and everything connected with it, thronged through my brain and gave me no rest. What did the lady think? For, as yet, she knew not the cause of my strange intrusion. Would she recognise me? Would she allow me to make her acquaintance? How could I gain absolution for my frightful proceeding?

But the breakfast bell cut short my unsatisfactory musings, and I joined my friends in the dining-room.

Gus met me and placed me at his side, saying:

"Mother, here's poor Martin, who, as I told you, has been wandering in the grounds half the night, and stands in sore need of some of your best coffee."

After a smiling welcome from host and hostess, I greeted my other acquaintances among the merry party, and was introduced to the new-comers, Mr. and Mrs. Franklin, Mr. Preston, and—Miss Rossiter!

The lady strove her best to look unconcerned, but a blush would rise, and a repressed smile would dimple her cheeks; these, coupled with my embarrassment, caused some glances of surprise, and led Gus to exclaim:

"I believe you've seen each other before!"

I was silent, but Miss Rossiter instantly regained her composure, and replied:

"Yes, I think I have met Mr. Martin before, though I never had the pleasure of an introduction."

Bless her woman's wit! At this remark everybody subsided into customary commonplace, and breakfast went on.

It perhaps is almost unnecessary to say that my constant endeavour after this was to gain a private interview with Miss Rossiter, but, as we were decidedly new acquaintances, taken with the fact that she evidently avoided such a meeting, to accomplish the matter was a feat of some difficulty, and several days elapsed before I managed to do so.

At length, one pleasant day, when the ladies were supposed to be taking an after-dinner nap, I strolled towards a little rose-arbour with my cigar and book.

As I went in from the clear sunshine, my dazzled eyes did not at first identify a lady, who hastily rose in some confusion as I entered.

"I beg your pardon," I began, then suddenly

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recognised Miss Rossiter. "I implore you," I quickly ejaculated, "hear me! Only grant me five minutes! I must explain!"

The lady hesitated.

"Miss Rossiter," I continued in calmer tones, and with some dignity of manner, "I have to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your wonderful self-control and considerate silence in an affair that causes me the utmost distress and regret. If you will allow me, I will try to explain that unfortunate occurrence in such a way that even you will pardon me."

"You have my permission, sir," said Miss Rossiter, with a little stateliness, that I rather fancied was assumed to keep herself from smiling.

Somewhat encouraged I went on, and, if ever a man racked his brain for fit words for the occasion, I was that man, and I soon had the satisfaction of receiving full acquittal from the lady, together with the admission that she thought that inasmuch as I had unwittingly stumbled into such a predicament, I had chosen the very wisest course for extraction.

After this we were friends. She avoided me no more, and, in truth, it was not long before Gus accused me of being "regularly gone" on Mabel—a fact which I did not care to deny, and only wished he had been as good an authority as to the state of her mind towards me.

However, the few bright weeks, filled with all sorts of frolics, rides, drives, and tennis matches, slipped away rapidly, and the breaking-up was at hand.

On the last night of our stay, I coaxed Mabel down to the little rose-arbour. She seemed shy of entering, until we spied therein two or three others of our party enjoying the beauty of the evening.

After we had all chatted awhile, we were interrupted by Marlowe, who came after the rest of the party, according to appointment, to take a last excursion. This left Mabel alone with me, and, with a quickness born of desperation, I told her I loved her, and asked her to be my wife.

I need not put her reply in words; but, after the lapse of about half-an-hour, as I sat with her fair hands in mine, just as the voices of the returning party were borne to our ears, I said:

"How good it was of you, darling, not to make an alarm that time, as most women would have done unthinkingly, and then, what a position we should have been in!"

"Thank you, dear," she responded demurely, "but I must not accept more merit than I deserve. You see, I knew you, if you didn't know me; for, only the evening before, when Gus had gone to the station to meet you, good Mrs. Thwaites was talking about you, and showing the large photograph of you in the album in her room. So I recognised you, and, of course, after the first uncontrollable start, I knew that you were not likely to be prowling about with fell designs on unprotected damsels, or jewels; I knew, too, that I had your room, and, therefore, though very much amazed, I was not so utterly beside myself with fright as you have imagined."

I closed her lips with a kiss; but I insisted then, and still insist, that a most flagrant case of scandal was avoided simply by Miss Rossiter's presence of mind.

M. E. H.

A Nihilist's Revenge.

AN ugly, muggy, chilly evening, in spite of the fact that it was midsummer; but then I had found that weather in St. Petersburg was not all to be depended on. The streets were deserted, save when the death-carts rattled along, unmindful of their ghastly burdens. The city clocks had struck ten, and I was hurrying home—or rather to my den—to write my "special" to a London daily. Correspondents' letters are generally built upon a frail foundation of truth, but now, in these cholera times, I could hardly find time, or words strong enough, to depict the horrors I saw on every side.

I had delayed writing a little longer than usual, so that I might go more deeply into details, for the benefit of my horror-loving countrymen, and I was in haste. I was obliged to go through that part of the city most infected with the awful plague, where the air seemed reeking with infection, but being pretty well seasoned, I did not mind it very much.

As I hurried along, I saw, standing under a lamp, whose dim rays shed light but a few feet around it, a woman dressed in white.

As I passed her she stepped forward and said, with a tone of recognition: "I have been waiting for you."

I paused, and to my surprise recognised my beautiful friend, the Countess Reifsky, the toast of a hundred ballrooms, who had been flirting with me fast and furiously for some weeks—why, I could not imagine.

With reproof in every accent I exclaimed:

"Madame, what are you doing in this deadly atmosphere, and alone, at this hour?"

"I have been waiting for you," she repeated simply.

"How in the name of wonder did she know I was coming this way when I did not know it myself?" I asked myself.

I assumed a severe air.

"You must not stay here."

"No; I mean to take you with me to the final meeting of a society to which I belong. To-night we disband, and I want you to be there to describe the affair with your versatile pen to your great English people.

"You know we Nihilists are so misrepresented. No, you need not shrink away; you will come to no harm. Perhaps you do not enjoy being with a 'suspect.' To-night the far-reaching grasp of the Tsar himself would find it hard to reach me, and I shall place you beyond his power too. But we must hurry."

Half reluctant, and wholly fascinated, I allowed her to

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lead me along through the deserted streets until we came to a small, low building, which showed no ray of light. Here she tapped softly. The door swung back on noiseless hinges. Along a dimly-lighted hall we went to another door, which opened in the same quiet fashion, and we stood in the dazzle and glitter of a ballroom.

In my business suit I ought to have felt embarrassed, but I did not, for I was too much impressed by the scene before me.

It reminded me of what I had known in my younger days as "phantom parties," at which youths and maidens draped themselves in sheets. Yet that memory should not have given me a feeling of repugnance, for of those happy days I had the pleasantest recollections. As I looked more closely I recognised the fact that these people were masquerading in grave-clothes—mocking the destroyer which held the city in its grasp; and a great horror filled me.

I heard a low, musical laugh from the woman at my side.

"Monsieur does not approve of our masquerade? We laugh at Death. Come it in whatever fashion it may, by pestilence or in Siberian mines, we do not fear it. Swift or slow, it matters not to us."

"Yes, madame; I have heard that you Nihilists, if I must class you among them, care not how swift be the death to which you consign your victims."

"I see you do not approve of our methods, but you see we know of no other way more honourable. With us the end justifies the means, but when we must send death it is always quick."

"Not always. Bombs don't always work surely."

A gleam in my fair companion's eyes warned me I was on dangerous ground, but it was gone almost instantly, and she continued:

"Now in the case of the late prime minister—when his fate was sealed, we decided——"

I caught her arm, not knowing what damaging revelation she might make.

"Countess, you are insane. In your country, walls have ears."

"Monsieur, these walls are safely guarded. But we are missing the music and the dance."

Never, so long as memory lasts, shall I forget that evening. Noble and artisan met on equal ground. Social distinctions seemed for the time being obliterated. Brain, wit, and a common cause were the passports to this brilliant society. Words were spoken which would condemn a man to Siberia for a lifetime. No one seemed to notice me very much, beyond a courteous recognition, and as I looked among the guests, I saw my brother correspondent and compatriot, John McPherson, who was also clad in a business suit, and who seemed, like myself, a visitor.

The hours flew past. I thought somewhat uneasily of my neglected letter, but could not drag my reluctant feet away from the fascination of the scene.

The music grew faster, and more weird were the strains. My feet fairly ached to tread to their measure, but something held me back.

The hour grew late, the lights were dim, still the dancers kept up their dizzy whirl. The music rose and fell now wailing now entreating; I felt I must yield to it. My beautiful countess put her white arm on mine. I felt her warm breath sweep my cheek.

"Come with me; forget toil and sorrow. Name and fame are worth little. Together we should be for ever happy."

I looked into her great, seductive brown eyes, and almost yielded, but before my vision came a little primrose-faced girl I had left in a Devonshire village. I saw her as I had bidden her good-bye, and I pushed my temptress back.

The white arm fell, the music stopped with a crash, the decorations faded, the smiling faces vanished—changed in an instant—and with a cry of horror I saw death written on every countenance. I heard a hissing in my ear:

"When you are racked with pain upon a cholera bed, remember a Nihilist's revenge."

The floor swam. I turned and fled. At the door I met McPherson. Outside the grey dawn had broken; I turned to see where we were, and I recognised the grim walls of the morgue.

An hour later Mac and I were counted among the plague victims, hurried to the pest house. I pulled through, almost by a miracle; he, poor fellow, found a nameless grave.

Some weeks later, when I looked over the piles of newspapers which had accumulated in my absence, I read the notice of the death of the Countess Riefsky on the 17th of July, the day of my strange adventure.

H. P. D.

NOW READY.

Pearson's Magazine.

MAY, 1896.

Gates and Pillars of the Empire. *Robert Machray.*
No. 2.—Glasgow Illustrated.

The Ransom (A Complete Story). *C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne.*
Illustrated by Warwick Goble.

The Gorgeous Palaces of the Tsar. *Mary Spencer Warren.*
Illustrated with photographs.

Negro Serenade—"I Don't Care." *H. J. Nicholls.*
Illustrated by S. Nation.

Curiosities of Stained Glass Windows. *Ernest R. Suffling.*
Illustrated with drawings and photographs.

The Liar (A Complete Story). *Edwin Pugh.*
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The Editorial Mind.

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THE LAW OF THE PLAINS.

The outfit of twelve waggons had stopped at a point on the Rio Pecos about seven miles above the town of Anton Chico. We had supper and were smoking our pipes, and it was between sunset and dark when a young fellow about twenty years old came riding up from the direction of the Comanche country. He was dressed like a cowboy, and what few words he spoke were in good English. He rode up to a camp-fire round which five or six of us were sitting, and after a "Good-evening" to all, dismounted and let his gaze wander about.

Teamster No. 5 was a Mexican half-breed known as Big Pete. He gave a start of surprise as the stranger rode up, and I heard him cursing and muttering to himself. By-and-bye the boy fixed his gaze on Pete and kept it there for a long half minute. There was a sort of smile on his face which made one think of the look of a wolf who had pursued a victim for hours and hours and was finally near enough to seize it.

"Rifle, pistol, or knife?" he asked of Pete in a low, even voice.

The big fellow looked round uneasily. He was no coward, as we all knew, but the sudden appearance of the boy had startled him for a moment. A full moon was coming up, and there would be light enough for fire-arms. He was a good shot, but that long, sharp knife was his favourite weapon. Besides, he was a giant compared to that slender but active-looking youth.

"The knife, and I will give you one minute to say your prayers!" shouted Pete as he sprang up.

"Very well. Just as you please!" quietly replied the young man as he unbridled his horse and sent him away.

Not a word was spoken by any of the rest of us. We all rose up, but made no other move. Not a question was asked of either man. It was the law of the plains. One man had the right to demand satisfaction of another by rifle, revolver, or knife. As to the cause of the quarrel, why should we ask or care? Pete removed his belt and jacket and sombrero, and tied a handkerchief around his head. The stranger removed his belt in which he carried a couple of revolvers, threw aside his sombrero, and walked off to a distance of fifty feet. Pete followed. Every man in camp formed a circle about the pair. The moon made everything as plain as daylight. The horses and mules were all to the right of us. So far as I could see, all of them stopped feeding and gazed steadfastly at the circle.

"Ready!"

It was the stranger who called out, and at the word both moved into the centre of the ring and menaced each other. A fight to the death with knives is a horrible thing to look at, and yet there is a magnetism about it which forces you to stand and look till the end comes. Boxers move about, feint, advance, retreat, rush at each other, and grapple. So it is with men who fight with knives. Back and forth across the circle, round and round it, their knives now and then clashing together, and it was ten long minutes before blood was drawn. With the first drop came death.

No man called out. No man in the circle moved out of his tracks. Some of the horses came nearer and whinnied softly, as if asking what it was all about, but this we remembered afterwards. Big Pete was working to make his great strength bring him an advantage. If he could seize that boy's right arm with his left hand and hold it for five seconds the duel would be ended. Thrice he attempted it and thrice he failed. Suddenly the boy found the opening he had been seeking. So swiftly that none of us could follow him he sprang forward under the uplifted right arm there was the flash of a knife, and Big Pete uttered a groan and sank down.

"You are witnesses that it was a fair fight," said the stranger as he stood over Pete and looked round the circle.

It was fair, but no man answered. He called his horse by a low whistle, slipped on the bridle, and half a minute later was cantering away to the east. Big Pete had wronged him. The law of the land would not give him satisfaction. The law of the plains had avenged him. A grave beside the Pecos—a guess or two as to the stranger's identity—that was all.

Harry Rogers.

PICTURE ✣ PUZZLE ✣ PRIZE.

No. 5.

£10 TO BE GIVEN AWAY.

On the opposite page is a puzzle picture composed of 88 squares. If these squares be rearranged in a certain order they will form a real picture.

We offer a prize of £10 for the correct solution. In order to give readers in all parts of the United Kingdom as equal a chance as possible, none of the solutions received will be opened until Thursday, May 7th, when all those received will be considered together. In the event of two or more correct solutions being included in one day's post, the prize will either be given to the sender of the *neatest* one, or will be divided amongst the correct competitors at the discretion of the Editor. Consolation Prizes will also be awarded.

If no correct solution be received on or before Tuesday, May 12th, 1896, the Ten-Pound Prize will be given to the sender of the solution then to hand which is most nearly correct.

Pictures should be packed flat or folded, not rolled, and the outside wrapper must be marked "July."

N.B.—To make the puzzle more difficult some of the squares have been turned upside down, others sideways.

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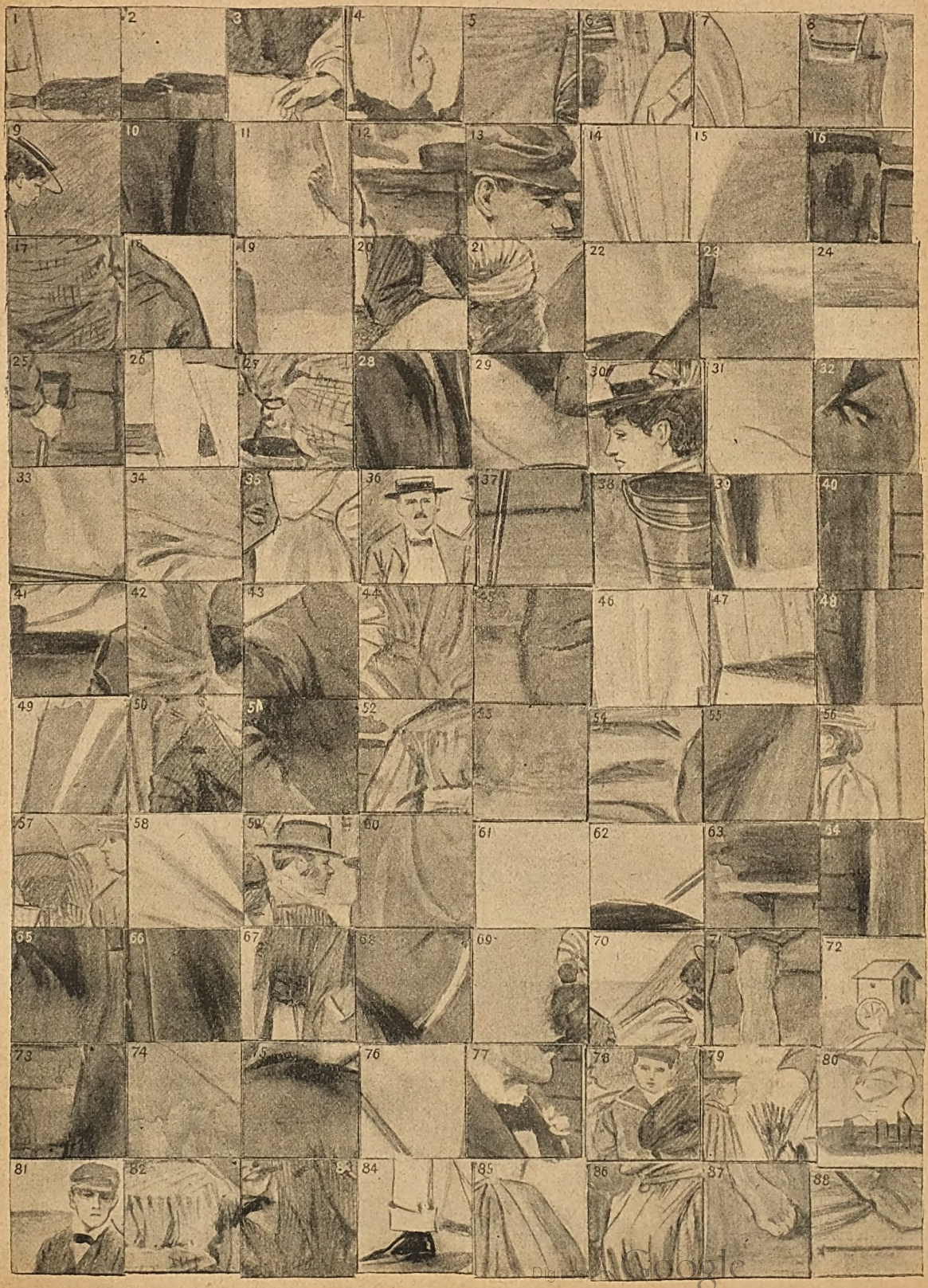

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THE WINNING OF GUNHILD:

Or, The Vengeance of the Vikings.

By GEORGE C. WALLIS, Author of "Behind the Barrier," etc.

SUMMARY.

Valstran, a Dane, attacks North-hold, a Viking homestead, during the absence of the young men. Sigismund and Olaf follow the raider, but are defeated, and Olaf is killed. Editha, their mother, and Earl Bjorne, her husband, induce their only remaining son to take Harald Aslison and go out again in the new ship, the *Walrus*. Before leaving, Harald plights his troth to his cousin Gunhild, daughter of Editha. While they are out fighting against Valstran at sea, Turgrimm, a friend of Bjorne, comes upon the scene, but on learning that Harald requires help, refuses it, and goes on to Bjorne, whose daughter, Gunhild, he wishes to marry. Meanwhile Harald has slain Valstran, and after repairing his ship returns to North-hold on the eve of Gunhild's marriage with Turgrimm. A fight ensues between Harald's men and those of Turgrimm, with the result that the latter are turned out. Shortly after, Ogier, another friend of Bjorne's, arrives on the scene, and falls in love with Gunhild, but being a noble man, he resigns after discovering her love for Harald.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Stratagem.

Ogier was more reserved than usual that day, and listened with silent gravity when they told him of the doings of Turgrimm and his ejection from the house. When he had heard the whole story he sat awhile in thought, then said:

"You are noble lads, Harald Aslison and Sigismund Bjorne; you will always be welcome at my home. As for this Turgrimm, he is no longer a friend of mine."

And thinking of this, Ogier rose and went down to the shore and aboard the *Silver-Fox* and told the sailors left on guard what he knew, bidding them have no intercourse with the men of Turgrimm's *Hawk*.

It was growing dusk when he was ready to return, and once or twice on his way back he thought he heard the splash of oars and the muffled sound of voices on the fjord, but beyond wondering whether his quondam friend had anything to bring or send ashore, gave no further notice to the matter.

Now Turgrimm—for he it was whose oar-blades shattered the violet mirror of the water—had made up his mind to leave North-hold that very afternoon, but having afterwards seen a fierce-looking woman gesticulating wildly at the ship from the top of the rocks, a woman whom the sailors swore to be the witch Svenda of whom they had all heard, decided to land at twilight and consult her regarding his baffled plan, and even buy her aid, if by it his purpose might yet be worked.

He hailed the *Silver Fox* as he passed her in the boat, and receiving no response knew that Ogier had heard of his vain meanness, and so went on up the lake and landed, and then up the steep mountain path to where the cave of the Were-woman loomed black out of the hillside; the sudden fever of renewed desire and thwarted scheming and bitter hatred making him ready to listen to any evil counsel that might be given him, and more reckless than usual as to the right or wrong of his after-deeds.

Svenda looked even more frightful than she really was in the flickering glare of the torchlight she held aloft as she beckoned in, with skinny finger, her almost equally repulsive-featured guest. She stuck the spluttering torch in a cleft in the rock and then laughed—a shrill, gruesome, high-pitched laugh, that echoed dismally from the silent hills across the waters of the lake.

"Ha, ha! So you have come, as I expected, Sir Turgrimm!" cried she, drawing a short dagger from her black, matted hair. "And for no good purpose, I ween! Folk who have no dirty work to do give me plenty of room to pass as a rule."

"I am not here to listen to idle talk," said Turgrimm, "nor have I time to waste. I want your advice and help regarding something of which you may have heard. I am rich, so you will be well paid, and here is a small bag of gold to whet your interest."

The claw-like hand snatched the bag from his grasp, and the long, bony fingers closed on it greedily.

"Gold, gold!" cried the Were-woman, "it is the only thing I love now. But of your errand—there is no need to tell me, for I know what it is and how you may have revenge on your rival and secure your bride as well."

"How? Tell me," asked the man, from whose coward face all the colour was gone now, "tell me, witch, and your pay shall be doubled if it succeeds."

"Ay, I will tell you," said Svenda, playing with the short dagger, which seemed to slide along her horny skin without cutting. "I will tell you when I am ready. But know this, rich nithing, that it is for no friendship for you that I do this, but only for your gold and for the hate I bear another."

"Stop this chatter, woman!" cried Turgrimm angrily, though awed somewhat by the weirdness of the scene, "and put that knife down and tell me what I want. I have no time to waste, I repeat."

"It is a very useful dagger, and has done some good work in its time," said Svenda, grinning horribly, "it has drunk some noble blood before to-day, and is a wonderful silencer of one's foes! Ay, I will tell you, but first I would have you to know, Viking, that though I take your gold I hate you as I hate all men, whose hearts are full of deceit towards women, even as I hate all women for their pink prettiness and trust in men and fear of me. Yes, I hate you, as I hate them all.

"But for your ill-gotten gold

A fierce-looking woman gesticulating wildly at the ship from the top of the rocks.

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I will befriend you. Put your ear to my lips—nay, no shrinking, craven!—and I will whisper to you, for it is a thing not well to shout to the night air!"

Now, in this the Were-woman was wise, for it so happened that a thrall of Harald's who was passing along the cliff had been drawn to the cave by unusual curiosity to see what game the witch was up to with a light in her generally dark abode, and, being unperceived, had heard most of the foregoing conversation. Yet no names had been mentioned, and, though he strained his hearing, the plan they were concocting was whispered too low for him to catch its import, so he had only a vague tale to carry to his master, who laughed at it and said there were enough strong men in the hold to defy all the tricks of the Viking and all the spells of the witch.

Could Harald have seen the startled look on Turgrimm's face as he listened to the Were-woman's advice—a look that grew to a smile so malevolent as the witch breathed on the dagger and gave it to him, that the thrall was unable to decide which of the two faces was the more evil—he would have been less confident of his own and of Gunhild's security.

* * * * *

Towards the small hours of the morning, when peaceful and honest folk sleep most soundly, a little band of men crept up to the back of the house and made forcible but silent entry into the buttery, from where access to the several living rooms was easy, since it was not customary to secure inside doors in that age.

Softly stealing along the passages, the group came to the room where Harald's mother and sister slept, and, leaving the rest outside, Turgrimm stepped gently in, with dagger in hand, and sought the bed where the little girl lay.

A straggling glint of moonlight crept through the lattice, and shone for an instant on the fair young head, with its clustering curls, and the bare white arm thrown back upon the pillow; and very pretty appeared the sweet child sleeping there so placid, so innocent, and so unconscious of the short, sharp blade that hovered above the creamy throat.

Yet Turgrimm's heart gave him never a qualm, for every rough-and-ready Viking of his type had seen and done too many deeds of blood and rapine to be lightly turned aside from a cherished desire. The coast villages of our British Isles could have told many a harrowing tale in that time of the northmen's ruthless slaughtering that would have put this deed of his into the shade.

So the keen steel sank swiftly down with unwavering stroke, and the little life was quenched without a sound sufficient to wake the mother sleeping so near. Then, wiping the blade on the bed-linen, the Norseman stepped from the room as softly as he had entered, and when he and his men had got clear away from the house bade them run to the ship with all speed and weigh anchor and row up the fjord as quietly as possible. And ere the dawn had tinted the portals of the east with pink and rose and the household was awakened to the horror of the night the *Hawk* was far out of sight *up* the inlet and moored behind a sheltering spur.

* * * * *

How can I—why need I—tell of the finding of the little corpse, of the wild grief of Freyda, of the tearless sorrow of Harald, of the gloom on the whole house, of the stern resolve to wipe out the deed with the doer's life?

"'Tis no other than black-hearted Turgrimm," said Harald bitterly, remembering what the thrall had told him yesterday, "'tis he who has done this, or why would the *Hawk* be gone so suddenly? How many will go with me in the *Walrus*?—for this will be a sterner chase than that of Valstran."

No need to ask for volunteers—there were men enough and to spare for both his ship and the *Silver Fox*, which Ogier insisted on placing at his service, and giving themselves and their men scant time to put away the desire for food, Harald and Ogier and Sigismund went aboard the vessels and hoisting sail to a favouring breeze and setting all the rowers to work, stood out for the open sea with intent to come up with the *Hawk* if possible, or pursue her to her owner's home if necessary.

Harald and Sigismund stood in the bow, hand in hand,

The claw-like hand snatched the bag from his grasp.

both gazing seaward yet neither speaking for awhile. Then the one-armed cousin said in a choking voice:

"Come with me and have some food. You will require it before our revenge is done."

Harald made no answer. Little Thelma was his favourite, his darling, whose merry laugh and mirthful prattle had cheered and amused him at the close of many a weary day, and it seemed as though the intensity of his grief had dried the fountain of his tears and turned his face to stone.

And Freyda left at home was in no better way, refusing to be comforted by any of the kind friends who strove to assuage her sorrow, and sitting all the morning long rocking to and fro with her apron thrown upon her head.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WAGER.

THAT day, at noon, Turgrimm, watching from his deck, saw Svenda signalling to him from the cliffs near the Rainbow Falls, and knowing by that the coast was clear, came down to the landing-place with the ship, then boldly marched up to the sorrow-silent house.

There were but half-a-dozen able men besides the old Earl left in the place, and so what slight resistance was offered was useless to prevent the ruthless Vikings from carrying off Gunhild and leaving the house in a state of general wreck. The Earl they left bound in his chair, almost beside himself with impotent rage and futile self-reproach, and the women they fastened in their own room, so that it would be some time before they could escape to

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Turgrimm stepped gently in, with dagger in hand.

carry the news. Then, taking the weeping Gunhild down to the *Hawk* and binding her to the mast, they ran up the sail and forged out of the road and into the open sea.

For six days they held on to the south, undeterred by storm or tide and unchallenged by any hostile craft, and never once was Gunhild left unguarded all those weary days. Twice Turgrimm renewed his love-making, telling the scornful girl how he had bought advice from Svenda and carried it out—and yet cheated the Were-woman at the end.

"Yes, my pretty one!" said he, "you will have a cunning fellow for your husband soon. For the witch's help and incantations for my success she was to have two bags of gold, one of which I gave her at the time, promising to pay the other when satisfied. But never a glint of Turgrimm's gold will the foul hag see again! Ho! ho! By the Tree Igdrasil, the Nornas have spoken in my favour, sweet one, and you will do well to submit to me with a good grace!"

"Never!" said Gunhild.

"Wait until we get to Dertheim, pretty one," said he, "then we shall see. Meantime I doubt not that your brother and cousin have been there before me, only to find themselves well fooled. And if we can pass them unseen on their return journey all will indeed be well."

This latter sentence raised a sudden spark of hope in Gunhild's breast, only to be extinguished as suddenly, for a driving Northern mist came down the following night, and when it had cleared away next morning Turgrimm walked the deck in high spirits, thanking the gods for so favouring his schemes, for in the semi-light of the chill dawn his look-out had espied the black sterns of two ships rapidly vanishing into the grey murk to the north.

To Dertheim Hold, then, came Turgrimm and his prisoner, only to find, as they expected, that most of the home serfs were slain and the house itself a black, charred wreck, some of the smoke-grimed timbers still aglow with creeping veins of fire.

"They have done their work well, gentle maid, I swear!" said the Viking, stroking his grizzled chin and smiling ironically; "but 'tis little matter. I can soon have a new house built and buy fresh serfs, and while we are getting settled, you and I, Gunhild, can live in one of the cottages in the garth. And here, at all events, is the last place they will look for us again!"

The girl shuddered and shrank from his embrace as though stung by an adder, and frowning darkly at her aversion, Turgrimm ordered the men to take her to the nearest hut and fasten her in.

"We will see what a little wholesome solitude and frugal fasting will do for her proud scorn!" he said.

But there was something of the stern spirit of her mother, Editha, in Gunhild's nature; the gentle influence of the White Christ had not yet supplanted the belief in the brave old gods of the Northland, and so not a word of pleading nor a sign of submission did Bjorne's daughter give when Turgrimm went to see her on the third day and brought food and drink. She was almost spent then, but relentless still, though her fair cheeks were red with the course of many scalding tears, her eyes sunken in great hollows, and her lithe fingers chafed and thin with constant frantic clasping of her hands.

Clearly, if he would have her bend to his will without main force—which would be a profitless success at best, a poor end to his plan, though a revenge to be reserved to the last, if all else failed—some other means would have to be tried to bring her to a fit frame of mind.

It was in vain he raved and pleaded and swore and spoke such honeyed words as he could, and threatened and sneered by turns. At last, weary of his importunity and tired of listening in silence, Gunhild rose up in fiery disdain, and, with eyes flashing and a rush of colour to her pallid cheeks, cried:

"I will *not* be your love, coward, traitor, and murderer! I will never consent to be married to so vile, so evil-hearted a man; nay, if you and your cruel men force me to the bridal seat of your new house, and bind the wedding-crown upon my head, and force the loving-draught between my lips, even then I shall defy you. At the last I shall have the one resource left that not even you can take away, for if you drag me to your bridal bed, it shall be as a corpse, and a corpse only! And now go, nor think I shall soil myself with speaking to you further."

Turgrimm quivered under the lash of her stinging and

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defiant words. He bit his lip in vexation till the blood came, and went out of the hut, darkly revolving certain plans in his mind. For a time now, Gunhild was left in peace and was well fed, though closely secured and guarded.

At the end of a month from her coming to Dertheim, a part of the new house was finished, and therein Turgrimm and his chief vassals installed themselves, making boisterously merry the first night of their dwelling there over the return of one Sigurd, a great-limbed, strong-sinewed berserker who had been in Turgrimm's service long before.

The ale passed freely round, and joke and story of none too choice a kind was told from roysterer to roysterer along the board, but loudest voiced of all and most unblushing in the telling of deeds of shame and blood, and most uproarious in his coarse mirth, was Sigurd, the berserker, who, as midnight neared, began to rave in his cups, and to become a dangerous neighbour. Inch by inch the men on either side of him at the table edged further off, and even Turgrimm himself, evil and hardened as he was, felt put to the blush by this erstwhile follower of his, and what with fear for his freaks and mortification at the failure of his wooing, sat moody and taciturn at the feast.

"What ails you, friend?" said Sigurd, noticing this at last. "Why look so miserably glum when all are so jolly? Art in love, or hast lost a fortune?"

Turgrimm's face darkened, but not wishing to appear offended, he owned that it was a woman that was the cause of his depression.

Loud and long laughed Sigurd at that.

"Come, bring out your wayward charmer!" he roared in his thick, gruff voice, a loud hiccough punctuating his sentences, "and let us look at her, and maybe we shall find means to conquer her dislike."

Turgrimm hesitated at first, but Sigurd looked so menacingly at him when he began to offer excuses that he sent a couple of stout thralls to the hut, who brought her in and placed her, with hands bound, at the end of the long pine table.

"She is my prize," said Turgrimm, a way of keeping her from Sigurd—whose wolfish eyes were feasting on the beauty which showed even under the sorrow-stains of captivity—suggesting itself to his mind, "she is mine, but so wayward that if you care, my doughty men, we will play a game of odds, and she shall be my wager."

So the half-drunken men fell to and played; but Sigurd had learned more craft on his travels than Turgrimm gave him credit for, and, to the latter's disgust, won all before him, until only his host remained to play.

Then the two villains sat down to play the last game, each prepared to stretch his honesty as far as the bleared eyes around would let, and in the end Turgrimm won. Gunhild gave a sigh of relief. He was brute enough, but the thought of falling into Sigurd's clutches—to be his sport for an hour, and then to be cast to the serfs, perchance—was too horrible. That worthy, however, was not to be put off so easily; he saw the look of relief in her eyes, and it fanned the flame of his vile desire.

"Not so fast, friend Turgrimm!" he roared, twisting his grey-streaked beard in his rough hand savagely; "we will have another game now, and she shall again be the wager. We will wrestle for her, you and I!"

The other's face turned a sickly paleness at that suggestion, but there was no help for it, so he said:

"As you will; but first let some of my serfs have the chance of winning her."

"I care not how I get her so I do get her!" laughed Sigurd, "whom shall I treat to the strength of these arms?"

"Othnar shall try the hazard," and Turgrimm named the stoutest-limbed and most noted wrestler present, "and the girl to the winner."

Then Othnar rose from his seat, and glancing once at Gunhild, advanced to meet the berserker, and the two were soon locked in a mad embrace, writhing this way and that along the rush-strewn floor.

The others drained their cups and sat back to watch and cheer them on with drunken levity, while Gunhild stood trembling at the end of the table, watching the two men with dilating eyes, her mind in a whirl of terror.

Presently the grey light of early day crept in through the casement and shone with ashen tint upon the flushed faces of the drunken men around the table, and the fiery visages and contorted forms of the two who still struggled, with cracking joints and heavy breathing and violent lifts, to win a wager that such men have seldom chance to wrestle for.

At last, with a crafty move, a mighty heave, Sigurd got Othnar off the ground, and poising him in air a moment, gathered his strength and threw him backwards over his shoulders with such force that the wretched man's head bent under him as he fell, and his backbone snapped and he died with one wild gasp of pain!

Forgetting that he was their master's servant, the men broke into a loud cheer at the feat, and drew back readily to let the victor seize his prize. And Turgrimm himself was too much in bodily fear to venture to cross the berserker in his present mood, so said not anything when Sigurd cut the thongs that bound Gunhild's hands, and finding she would not follow him outside to the hut allotted to him, and where he intended sleeping off the wild carouse, seized the rich golden hair that hung dishevelled on her back and shoulders, and bore her by it shrieking through the doorway.

In that awful moment Gunhild felt that all hope was lost, and breathing Harald's name with her lips, drew the small dirk she had cherished for this last resource with intent to plunge it into her heart and so end the suffering that her luckless beauty had brought upon her. But the berserker saw the steel in time and snatched it from her grasp, and with a little cry of despair the girl swooned away.

CHAPTER X.

THE EDGE OF THE LONG SWORD.

VOYAGE-WORN and sorrow-weary, Harald and his friends came back to North-hold after a three weeks' fruitless search along the coast and in the many inlets, and with dejected air walked into the great hall. One glance around showed the three leaders that their enemy had been there since their departure, and a chill of terror struck Harald when he saw that Gunhild sat not by her mother's side, and that the eyes of stern Editha were even then red with tears. They saw the question in his eyes, and the old Earl said in a broken voice:

The girl shuddered and shrank from his embrace.

"'Tis better you should know, all of you, at once. Turgrimm and his men came here the day you left and slew my men and carried away my Gunhild. And you have not found him?"

"No," said Sigismund, for Harald could find no words, and Ogier was slower of speech than even he was wont. "We sacked and burnt his place, but he was not there, and we have hunted him along the coast in vain."

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"What can be done?" queried Editha, in a hard, dry tone.

"Nothing," said the Earl; "it will be a useless search I fear, now that you have missed him."

"Nothing!" cried Longsword, turning to face the old man, "nothing! By Thor, but if you can give up your daughter so easily, I cannot give up my love while I have strength to wield a trusty blade! Come, Ogier, we will hunt out this Were-woman who was seen in converse with that dog, and force her knowledge out of her, if need be. Come!"

Impatient, Harald strode away, and the two followed with hasty strides until they came to the gloomy cavern, where Svenda sat brewing a foul-smelling stew in a small pot on a log fire. She looked up swiftly at their entrance, then went on stirring the mess with studied unconcern.

"We have come to ask, Witch," cried Harald, shaking her roughly by the shoulder, and forgetting all fear of her in his haste to get news of his stolen darling, "what you said to Turgrimm the night he slew my little sister in her sleep. We want to know where the wretch has gone. Do you hear?"

"I am not deaf, my fine young sir," growled the Were-woman, never looking up from her work, save once when Harald's man, Eric, with bow in hand, entered the cave and stood behind his master. "I am not deaf, nor am I in any mood to do you a favour, for love or for gold!"—and she laughed again that horrible laugh of hers—"but I will tell you what you want because this Turgrimm cheated me out of half my price for breathing him a spell and lending him my silent dagger and suggesting a clever way for his dull wit to follow. Yet I will take your money after all. How much will you give me for my news?"

"A hundred marks of gold," said Harald abruptly.

"Then if you want the wretch—who thought to cheat me and escape my vengeance—you must seek him in his own lair, for there I told him to go after you had been and returned. His ship was anchored yonder by the cliff when yours set sail, and you must have missed him on the seas. Now your gold!"

"Not a mark, not a grain, wretched witch!" said Harald turning on his heel; "you may be thankful that I have not time to stop and slay you for your foul work. Come, friends; we have work to do now, and must be away!"

"For that defiance I will tell you what I would have kept back," cried she. "I will tell you that the Valkyrs have chosen one of you three; that one of you goes to his death! And for that defiance I will have my revenge on you, Harald Aslison!" and Svenda sprang towards him with a scream of rage, and raised her claw-like hands as though to strike him to the earth. But Eric, who had been silently fitting an arrow to his bow while they talked, was too quick for her, and ere the talons could descend, the feathered shaft had caught her full in the breast, and Svenda the Witch fell back with a wild shriek of mingled hate and pain.

"A good deed well done!" cried Harald, with the first smile that had wreathed his face since little Thelma had been killed. "Let us be gone."

Back to the hold they went and told their news, and after restocking the two ships with more food and more weapons, prepared to set out once more on their voyage of vengeance. Harald and Sigismund would have dissuaded Ogier from risking his life in their quarrel, especially after the evil prophecy they had just heard, but he simply answered, in a tone that ended the matter:

"I shall not rest till Turgrimm be sent to Hela. I am a man, and my friends' quarrels are my quarrels."

Then Harald sought out Earl Bjorne before he went aboard, and told him of his love for Gunhild, and begged his consent to their marriage if he should succeed in rescuing her in time. The old man broke down at that appeal, remembering his harsh treatment of Harald, and said:

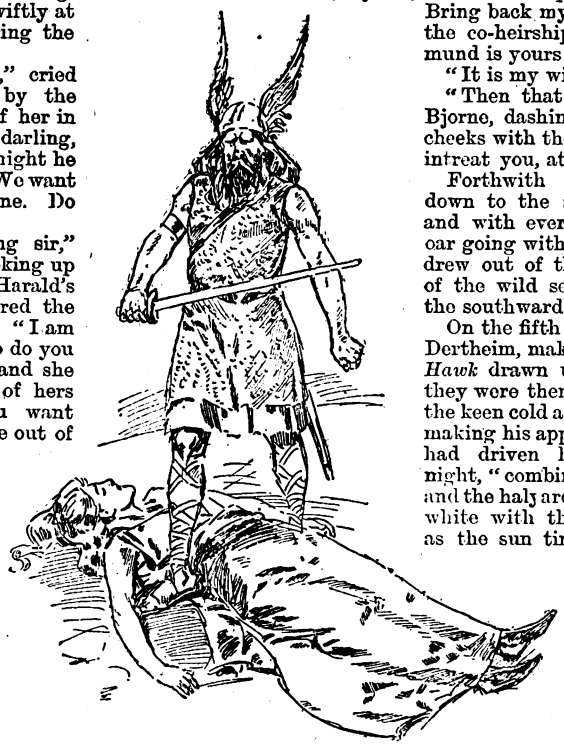
"Go, my son, and waste no precious time over my wishes. Bring back my Gunhild to me, and she and the co-heirship to North-hold with Sigismund is yours from then, if he wills it."

"It is my wish," said Sigismund.

"Then that is settled, my sons," cried Bjorne, dashing the tears from his aged cheeks with the back of his hand. "Go, I intreat you, at once, and fail not."

Forthwith the stern-faced men went down to the ships and got under weigh, and with every inch of sail set, and every oar going with a measured, sweeping swing, drew out of the fjord to the open bosom of the wild sea and held on their way to the southward night and day.

On the fifth morning they drew near to Dertheim, making out the dark hull of the *Hawk* drawn up on the shore long before they were themselves visible—so clear was the keen cold air. The frost king, Thrymm—making his appearance early this autumn—had driven his cloud-horses home last night, "combing their manes" as he went, and the halyards and masts and sheets were white with the small round rime, which, as the sun tinged it, shone and sparkled and glistened in the level rays like a myriad glow-worms clustered round the ropes and spars and sharp and rounded woodwork edges.



The berserker standing over her with a great blade drawn.

"Luff!" cried Harald to his sailors, as the cold shore loomed into nearer view. The willing men ran to their work with eagerness, despite their numbed hands and the keen breath of the morning wind, and in a trice ran the brace through the blocks and brought the boom round, and very soon the *Walrus* hove to, and they let down the gangway plank and Harald and Sigismund got ashore. The *Silver Fox* touched ground at almost the same moment, and Ogier and his men joined them ere they had taken ten paces towards the half-built house, wherefrom streamed several rays of sickly light and the sound of loud laughter and many voices.

"How best can we surprise them?" asked cautious Sigismund.

"I care not how, so long as we get them at sword-point, and that speedily," said Harald; "but we had best stay here till Ogier can reach the back, and so——" when suddenly a wild cheer rang out from the house, followed by a brief calm, and then the door was opened, and out came Sigurd the Berserker, dragging Gunhild with him.

Harald sprang forward with a cry and an oath, saw Gunhild snatch something from her bosom and Sigurd dash it from her hand, and came up to find her fainted away, and the berserker standing over her with a great blade drawn.

Their swords struck fire on the instant, and at the ringing sound out poured Turgrimm and the rest of the startled

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revellers from the house, the sailors surrounding them at once, and back to back the doomed men, sobered suddenly, fought as best they could at the disadvantage.

They were outnumbered, surprised, and unsteady with drink and long sitting, and very soon the paid men of Dertheim were separated and cut down one by one till only Turgrimm himself, and Sigurd, and four others, remained alive. Turgrimm, feeling that his last hour had come, had turned at bay and was fighting as desperately as any of the rest, and these six made so stubborn a resistance that there was a fear lest the whole country-side should be roused ere the work was done.

But the cool bravery of silent Ogier, and the cautious strokes of one-armed Sigismund and the fierce sweeps of Longsword, were not to be denied, and it was not long before only Sigurd and Turgrimm were left, standing back to back inside the closely-pressing ring of their pitiless foes.

Now the berserk fury came upon Sigurd, and, being relieved of Harald's attack now that the latter was engaging Turgrimm, he turned, all wounded and bleeding as he was, the foam flecking his lips and his bloodshot eyes glaring fire, and laid about him so lustily that the sailors gave back a space before his terrible advance.

Then Sigismund stepped forward to stop him as he strove to reach the recumbent form of Gunhild, but the great, heavy blade whirled madly once in air and then came down, and Sigismund's sword broke under it and he fell, the berserker's weapon piercing his mail at the shoulder joint.

Then, as the blade flashed once more above Gunhild's prostrate form, Ogier sprang to the rescue, and the silent man's axe struck the mad giant full on the nape of the neck and hurled him sprawling forward with a vivid roar of pain that ended in a death-rattle as he touched the ground.

Meantime, Harald had been playing with Turgrimm as a cat with a mouse, beating his defence at every stroke, piercing his armour in a score of places, and sending him reeling from the long sword's point till he was tired of the grim frolic, yet delaying the fatal blow so that his foe felt the fear of death a dozen times or more. But as Sigurd fell, what little spirit was in the craven flared up like the last flicker of a dying candle, and for a moment, with wild, reckless strokes and fierce cuts he held Harald on equal terms.

Then his strength and nerve failed, the merciless foe beat down his last weak effort of defence, sending his blade spinning from his hand; and then, raising Longsword's shining length above his head, Harald brought down its keen avenging edge with wrathful force upon the cringing wretch before him, and so fiercely, that it bit clean through the polished helm, and hard skull, and evil head, and Turgrimm of Dertheim received the fate his wickedness well deserved.

* * *

Then they fired the half-built house and the stranded *Hawk*, and went back to their ships, the sailors carrying the insensible form of Gunhild and the body of dead Sigismund carefully on a bier of upturned shields.

Clasped in Harald's arms, her head upon his knee, Gunhild soon recovered from her long swoon, and smiled faintly up at him with a great joy when she saw that it was he and felt his passionate kisses upon her fair forehead and sweet lips. And he, all hacked and jaded by the fight, sat there holding her patiently until she was well enough to walk to the side to be refreshed by the salt sea-breeze as the *Walrus* ploughed the waters on her homeward way.

But the *Silver Fox* did not go back with them to Northhold. Ogier's love for Gunhild had risen within him anew, and tenfold stronger at sight of her, though he tried to fight it down, and he knew that in her presence there would be no peace for him. So when Harald pressed him to return, the man of few words said simply, as the two ships parted and the gulf between grew wider:

"I have done what I could to help you, friend Harald, but for many things it is better that I leave you now. Farewell!"

"Farewell!" said Harald, with a minor note of sadness in the joy that was his at last without fear, "farewell, dear friend, say at least that you will come again on a visit soon."

Ogier only shook his head at that, and Harald and Gunhild, with hands clasped, watched the brave, silent man, standing there so nobly in the stern of his ship, until his figure grew indistinct in the morning haze on the sea, and the blue distance swallowed him from their sight.

THE END.

The death of Turgrimm.

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JAKE'S SQUAW.

CARMEN stood in the door of the cookhouse, her hand shading her eyes, and gazed intently over the prairie towards the west. The level rays of the sun cast a rosy glow on her brown cheeks, and gave a reddish tinge to the coal-black hair falling straight over her shoulders, after the manner of married women of her tribe. Carmen was a Spanish-Indian half-breed, and a beauty. She was known at Star Camp as Jake Ringer's squaw. When Jake came back from Mexico, after the trouble about his knifing Longhaired Ike had blown over, he brought this woman with him.

Jake was not a man to be lightly questioned. He kept his affairs to himself, and his hand was ever ready to his pistol when he was pressed beyond his liking; but it was whispered among the boys that he had stolen his dusky bride from her mother's lodge on the night that was to have consummated her nuptials with Big Grizzly, the Apaché chief. Jake was kind to her in a fashion that decidedly astonished the men best acquainted with his fierce and gloomy character. As for Carmen, her soft, brown eyes followed her rough lord with the faithfulness of a dog; no white wife could have been so gentle or so helpful as this savage girl.

She had been alone for a week now, while the herders were off on the range, rounding up the horses for their yearly branding. To-night she looked for them home. There was a sound of bacon sizzling in the big frying-pan, brown jacketed potatoes peeped from their hiding-place in the hot ashes, and Carmen left the door for a moment to peep into the oven at the biscuit colouring delicately inside. Carmen cooked well, and the boys ound her presence a welcome one, freeing them of irksome stewing over the stove when they rode home tired and hungry.

She glanced through the window as she rose from her biscuit inspection, then hastily returned to her post n the doorway.

Far off on the edge of the prairie a tiny moving cloud imade its appearance, creeping snail-like towards her; gradually it rolled and swelled and came rushing over the intervening plain, taking shape into rounded puffs ever falling and renewing.

"La caballada!" she murmured, in a satisfied tone.

At last there came the thunder of quick hoof-beats, and then the excited herd dashed after their leader into the big corral. The heavy gates banged, the chains rattled over the staple. Five hungry men sprang from their saddles, and, hastily picketing their ponies, made a bee-line for the cookhouse.

They greeted Carmen with boisterous jollity, flung themselves upon their benches, and, without further ado, began to devour the food set before them.

"Hey! this coffee is prime, my Carmen!" "Some white woman taught yer to make biscuits, gal!" "I say, Jake, you bet it's fine to get back to Carmen's cookin'!" vociferated one and another, as, the edge of their appetites dulled, they began to ply their knives more slowly.

Carmen paid no attention to their rough compliments. She was standing behind her husband's chair, acting as waitress when occasion required, at other times fingering his sombrero or timidly touching his tousled curls. Each man was duly supplied with edibles; but the crispest bacon and brownest biscuit found their way to Jake Ringer's plate, until finally he looked up and announced: "I've had enough! Now eat yourself."

The men rose from the table, and scattered to their evening occupations; only Jake remained, smoking in the doorway, while Carmen sat down to her meal of fragments.

As the last slouching figure vanished towards the cabins, he turned to the woman with a slow smile, and asked in Mexican: "Has it been lonely these days, *cara mia?*"

"It is always night in my heart when thou art gone, oh, my husband!"

Then still in the soft Mexican tongue, they talked together of such things as made up their life—of the range happenings, of the morrow's work, of what they would buy in Alamito when the herds were driven in to be sold.

Lastly, as Jake rose and knocked the ashes from his pipe, he remarked, in English:

"To-morrow and Friday's the brandin', but Saturday I'll make the boys get out the plough an' fix us a fire-break. The grass is uncommon long jest now, an' it's dryin' fast. Ef we don't look out, we'll have the whole camp goin' up in smoke."

He strode through the starlit dusk towards his

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sleeping shack, and Carmen, shutting softly the door of the cookhouse, followed slowly in the same direction.

The air felt stifling and oppressive. A stiff breeze came out of the south, but its hot breath filled the frame with uncomfortable languor. Old Tom Griffin, standing in the door of the boys' shack, hallooed to Jake as he passed him. Carmen slipped by them and into her own little shanty.

"Looky here, Jake," growled old Tom in an undertone, "the boys is snoozin' a'ready, but I can't turn in fer thinkin' er that pesky long hoss-feed out yander. With this here breeze, a fire cud come a-gallopin'—what d'yer say ter you'n me goin' out now an' burnin' off a bit? Jest fer luck!"

"Pshaw, Tom, 'tain't so awful dry yet, neither. Turn in man, an' quit botherin'. After the brandin's done, we'll up an' plough a good breakin'. You bet I'm tired, an' I ain't no mind ter go burnin' off this time o' night."

He turned on his heel and disappeared into the smaller cabin. Old Tom shook his head. "Them boys ain't keerful enough," he muttered. "Seems to me them critters yander air oneasy." He glanced once more towards the corral, where an unusual stamping and pawing seemed to confirm his words; once more he shook his head doubtfully; then, after a look all round the horizon, where no uncommon sign was manifest, he at last sought his bunk. Tired nature soon drowned his fears in sleep.

Five hours later a slim, red tongue reached over the crest of the knoll that bounded the horizon of Star Camp to the south. It writhed this way and that among the long grass-stems. Another and another followed it, then a wall of flame, reaching east and west as far as the eye could follow, rose over the ridge and bore down, with racehorse speed, upon the devoted little settlement below.

Jake Ringer stirred uneasily in his sleep, and flung a protecting arm over the quiet figure beside him. A glare of lurid light filled the little room with the brightness of noonday; but still they slept on. Outside in the corral, horses were snorting and stamping, their wild eyes staring at the distant but swift-coming danger. The animals picketed on the prairie tugged at their stout ropes, rearing and screaming.

Old Tom Griffin, awakened by the rising clamour, sprang with a bound to the door. "Fire! Fire!" he shouted. "Quick, out of this, or ye'll smother like rats in a hole!"

Four half clad figures rushed out into the night, and Dick Elland beat on Jake Ringer's door, calling: "Up! up! if ye value yer lives!"

Roused from his heavy slumber, Jake stumbled across the floor; trembling, Carmen followed close behind.

One look at the oncoming demon brought Jake to his wandering senses.

"A back-fire, quick, you idiots!" he bawled, and made a break for the cookhouse.

Old Tom laid a powerful, restraining hand on his shoulder.

"Too late, my lad!" he shouted above the din of the frantic penned-in herd. "That furnace 'ud reach us afore 'twas even started."

Indeed, the fiery breath of the advancing flames already scorched their faces.

"We must trust to our good horseflesh!" spoke up Dick Elland quickly.

A rush for the picketed ponies—in an instant more each man was riding for his life.

Jake Ringer was first in the saddle; he curbed his frightened steed with one strong arm, and with the other swung Carmen's light form to a seat behind him.

It was old Tom who stopped at the corral, snatched the chain from its hook, and flinging wide the gates, gave freedom to the poor, crazed creatures within the walls.

Fear lent wings to their feet—the ridden and the riderless together dashed eagerly towards the dark northern horizon, where, miles away, lay safely in the cool waters of the Brazos. No one looked back in time to see how, with a leap and a roar, the hungry flames pounced on the deserted buildings, and, in one moment, licked up every trace of man's handiwork. On and on, mile after mile of dry prairie slipping back from their swift-beating hoofs, sped the fleeing band.

Anxious faces turned now and then to see if they kept their start from their evil pursuer. It was Carmen, cowering on old General's broad back—Carmen, clinging with a clutch of despair to Jake's shoulders—who turned the oftenest. It was Carmen who first noticed that the short distance—so terribly, hopelessly short—between them and the eddying flame cloud was lessening. She shrieked aloud in her terror, but Jake bade her sternly: "Take courage. It's only two miles more to the river."

Only two miles!—but the pace was telling. The work-weary and laden ponies were already distanced by the flying herd. Old General, with his double load, still kept his place in the van, but Jake could feel he was weakening.

Nearer and nearer swept the destroying element. Slower and slower seemed to move the panting and straining horses.

A mile—a half-mile—now but a quarter—to safety! Could they make it? The fire was pressing them closely; the stinging smoke blinded men and horses; their skins parched and cracked in the awful heat. Inch by inch old General lost his frontage; in vain Jake plied the spur; the good old horse was spent.

In one last despairing glance backward, Jake saw that the flames were upon them; his brave beast still staggered forward, but at that pace nothing could save them. Carmen's face was buried on his shoulder.

With parched lips, the man muttered: "At least we die together!"

A wild scream rang through the pall of grass smoke. Old Tom on the river bank heard it—"*Adios, caro mio*, one alone may be saved!"

The clinging arms relaxed; relieved of the woman's weight, the horse sprang forward.

For a second her figure stood haloed, as her hair and light garments blazed upward; then the swirling billows shuts out the terrible picture.

Jake Ringer covered his eyes and fell forward on General's neck. He did not know that his hair was singed and his clothes already smouldering as his horse plunged into the Brazos. He did not know that his comrades lifted him gently up the opposite bank as the fire swept to the water's edge and died into sudden darkness. But when he came back to consciousness, then he knew that Carmen had given her life for him.

GERTRUDE MILLARD.

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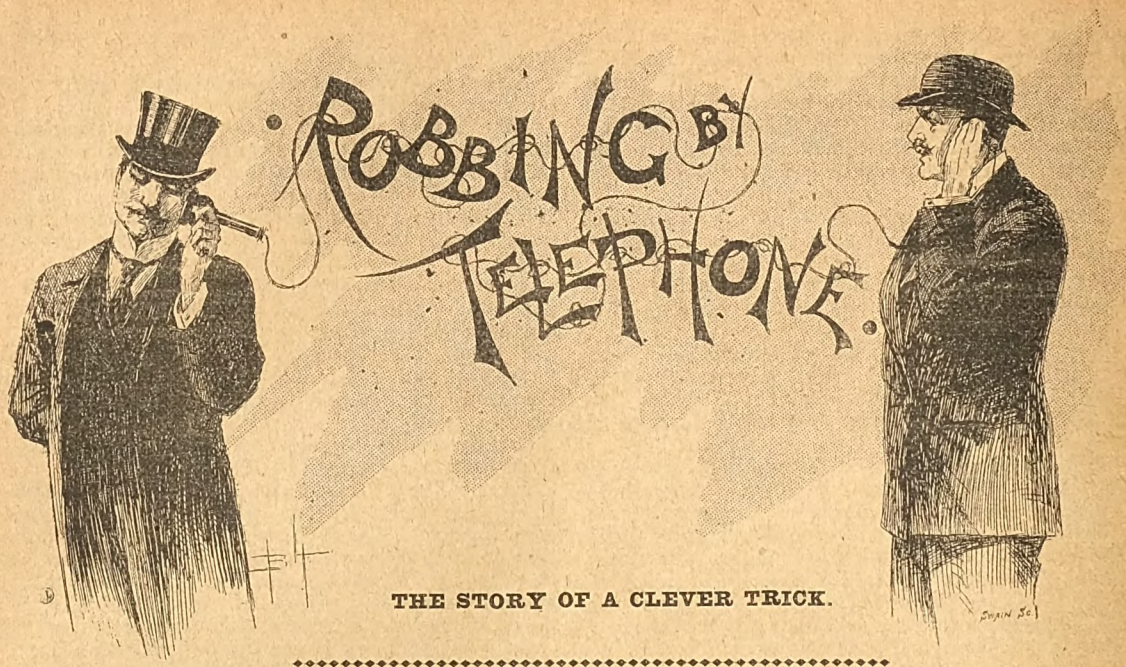

THE STORY OF A CLEVER TRICK.

"It is a well-known fact that no other section of the population avail themselves more readily and speedily of the latest triumphs of science than the criminal class," says a detective.

"The well-informed criminal skims the cream from every new invention, if he can make use of it. No iron safe has yet been constructed that keeps him out, but I don't recall a case in which this truth was more thoroughly demonstrated than the Maxwell case."

"What case was that?"

"It was at the time when the telephone had just been introduced into business and private use. George Maxwell was at that time one of the most successful speculators on 'Change, and was currently reported to have tipped the scale which marked £100,000. He was a young and handsome man, and had just married a lady of remarkable beauty. It was a decided love match. A score or so of messages were dispatched every day during business hours. They contained such important queries as: 12.10 p.m. 'How are you now, darling?' And replies like this: 2.35 p.m. 'I sigh for you. How is my sweetheart?' Well, to save outlay and to increase the facility of communication, Mr. Maxwell connected his office with his house by a private telephone wire.

* * * * *

"One day, just before the close of business, there was a ring at the telephone. The devoted husband, with a leap, was there. 'What does my darling wish?' he murmured.

"'I'm no darling. You mistake me, sir!' came the reply in a masculine voice, a voice rough and rasping, but very distinct.

"'Who are you, then?' asked the astonished Maxwell.

"'I'm Thomas Odell, the accomplished burglar, if you want to know!'

"'Repeat, please,' gasped the other.

"'Odell, the burglar,' came the answer. 'But, now listen, I cannot waste time. I and two of my gang have gained access to your house. The cook, the chambermaid, and your wife are lying here bound and gagged. The coachman has been disposed of. Some bundles of rags soaked in petroleum have been judiciously distributed about the house ready to be ignited.'

"'You scoundrel!' shouted the agonised husband, in an excess of emotion.

"'Don't excite yourself. Now, sir, here is my proposal. If you disappear from the telephone without acceding to it, I shall set fire to the house. It's no use applying to the police, for we'd be too quick for them. You will see, Mr. Maxwell, that you are utterly in my power. The only sensible thing you can do is to listen to my proposal, and to agree to it.'

"'Oh, I wish I had my hand at your throat, you villain!' shouted the other, shaking with rage.

"'But you know you haven't, so what's the use of your talking that way! Let us talk business instead. I need a loan of £2,000—cash. I need it at once. If you are inclined to lend me that sum without guarantee I shall leave your house with my men in exactly the same condition in which I found it.'

"'You are ruining me,' groaned Maxwell. 'And I don't think I have that much money in cash in the office safe.'

"'You'll force me to commit an atrocious deed,' came the remorseless reply.

"'All right, then—yes, I'll pay, but to whom?'

"'It is now 5.15 exactly. At this very moment my confederate has entered your office to receive the money. You will pay him and he will tell you that watchword agreed to between us, which you telephone to me at once.'

"Mr. Maxwell turned round. A stranger of pleasant mien, dressed in the height of fashion, stood before him. Said the visitor:

"'I have called to collect a little matter of £2,000 for a friend of mine, Mr. Thomas Odell.'

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"'I understand,' replied Mr. Maxwell, who went to the safe, took from it several packets of notes to the value of £2,000, and handed the money to the stranger.

"The latter ascertained that the amount was correct, and placed it inside his breast pocket.

"'And the watchword?' demanded Mr. Maxwell.

"'Do right and interfere not!' replied the burglar's confederate, with an assumption of dignity, and strode out of the office with all the grandeur of a Spanish hidalgo.

"'Do right and interfere not!' joyfully exclaimed Mr. Maxwell through the telephone. 'And, now you'll leave my premises, Mr. Odell, won't you? And as for my wife——'

"'Have no fear, Mr. Maxwell,' replied the man at the other end, 'you have to deal with a burglar and a gentleman.'

"Mr. Maxwell locked his office, and entering a hansom, galloped to his residence. The more closely he approached the keener his fear of a catastrophe became. But as he stopped at the gate he noticed nothing out of the way. He sprang up the stairs, and entered the pretty boudoir of his prettier wife. She was quietly reading.

She was quietly reading.

"'How you must have suffered, my angel!' he cried, and a sob shook his voice.

"The young wife looked up, astonished.

"'Suffered? I?'

"'That burglar, you know—it must have been awful. Oh, you poor darling!'

"'Why, George dear, what is the matter? You speak in riddles.'

"'But didn't he gag you?' he asked.

"'Now, my dear George, I wish you would talk sense. What do you mean?'

"After Mr. Maxwell has finished the recital of his adventure, he asked:

"'Wasn't there somebody here using my telephone?'

"'Why, yes, there was,' replied Mrs. Maxwell, 'a young and well-dressed man came in, introduced himself to me as Mr. Thomas Odell, a speculator and business friend of yours, and requested permission to make use of your private telephone to send you a most important message on business. Of course I gave him permission. He used the telephone but a short time, and then came back into the drawing-room, thanked me for the favour I had done him, and went away, saying that the telephone was a most useful and admirable invention, it facilitated business so much.'

"'And that was all?' queried Mr. Maxwell; 'he didn't gag you and the servants? He was alone, and did not offer violence to you?'

"'Not at all. He was most polite and gentlemanly, quite as much as you are at this moment, George.'

"'Great Scott!' exclaimed Maxwell with a wild outburst, 'how gigantically I've been sold. Excuse me, dear, but I can't help it. I'll drive over and interview the police.'

"And that's what he did," concluded the detective, "and that's the way I came in possession of the facts. In spite of all our efforts since we've heard nothing more of the £2,000, nor of Mr. Thomas Odell and his confederate."

H. LEGGETT.

TO TELL the CHARACTER from HANDWRITING

THE services of a famous graphologist have been retained for the benefit of the readers of S.S. The inquisitive should send a specimen of their handwriting upon an unruled sheet of notepaper and signed with their customary signature and full address. With this should be inclosed six stamps and a stamped and addressed envelope. All letters should be marked "Graphologist," and forwarded to *Pearson's Weekly* Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

A CONTINENTAL TOUR FOR £2.

As the holiday season has now arrived, special arrangements have been made with Messrs. Thomas Cook and Son for a three days' tour on the Continent. The itinerary which has been mapped out is this: London, Harwich, Antwerp, Brussels, and back, including a visit to the field of the battle of Waterloo. The entire trip will cost £2 a head. All applications for tickets must be made to this office, stating the date for which they are required and inclosing £2 in postal orders.

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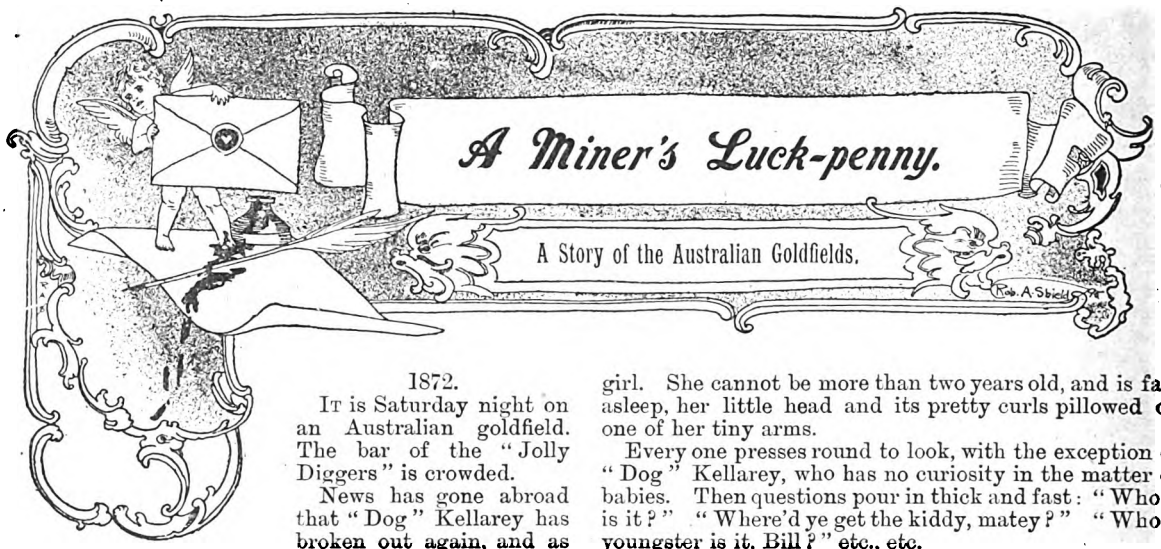

A Miner's Luck-penny.

A Story of the Australian Goldfields.

1872.

It is Saturday night on an Australian goldfield. The bar of the "Jolly Diggers" is crowded.

News has gone abroad that "Dog" Kellarey has broken out again, and as he always takes care to have his little bouts remembered, a crowd soon collects.

On this particular Saturday he has set himself to try conclusions with "Kangaroo Jack" of the Midas Claim. It is a gorgeous struggle—even old "Wall-Eyed Bill," who is exacting in such matters, is compelled to admit that. They fight anyhow and everywhere, under tables and over chairs—while the lamps flare, and the dogs bark, and the crowd expresses its admiration in language full of picturesque detail.

"Kangaroo Jack" tires after the twenty-sixth round, and his friends carry him to his tent minus one eye and plus concussion of the brain.

Then when "Dog" Kellarey counts his broken fingers every one suddenly remembers the unguarded condition of his tent and vanishes in the darkness not to reappear until the sound of the coach-horn is heard on Portugee Hill.

The arrival of the weekly coach, bearing Her Majesty's mails, is an occasion of great importance, and ranks even before New Finds or Warden's decisions.

About eleven o'clock the coach creaks and groans up the street to pull up before the flaming lights of the "Jolly Diggers." It is a curious, lumbering old construction, riding on leather springs, and drawn by five strong horses—a sort of badly brought up cross between an antique mourning coach and a dilapidated Indian ghari.

The driver, to whom is intrusted the lives of the half-dozen passengers, travels the 240 miles between the gold fields and civilisation twice weekly, and is always preternaturally thirsty. Custom, however, forbids his leaving his box before he has seen his horses unharnessed and led away, and exchanged the usual pleasantries with his own particular admirers. When in due time he does descend, passengers, diggers, loafers, and dogs escort him into the hotel, and in half-an-hour the excitement is over.

On this occasion, however, it is destined to last longer; "Dog" Kellarey, advancing, invites the driver to take refreshment.

After complying with the request, that individual gets out to the vehicle, to return with a bundle. Then, unwrapping the shawls, he places on the table a baby girl. She cannot be more than two years old, and is fast asleep, her little head and its pretty curls pillowed on one of her tiny arms.

Every one presses round to look, with the exception of "Dog" Kellarey, who has no curiosity in the matter of babies. Then questions pour in thick and fast: "Whose is it?" "Where'd ye get the kiddy, matey?" "Whose youngster is it, Bill?" etc., etc.

Any other man would be bewildered—not so Bill Burns. He says slowly and solemnly, as if aware of his unique importance: "For 'Dog' Kellarey!"

"What!" shouts that gentleman, "that's a lie, you Bill! Who says the kid's for me?"

"I do," replies the driver. "Paul Waites of Wild Dog shoved it aboard, along with its duds, for yer. The little 'un's father pegged out on Saturday—'Flash Dick' of Wild Dog Creek. 'Is last word was: 'Sen' the kid to my old mate, "Dog" Kellarey,' an' so I fetched it along, and the passengers made up the fare among 'em, so there's nothin' to pay—there!"

"Old Dick pegged out!" the "Dog" mumbles slowly, "old Dick pegged out, an' sent 'is kid to me!"

The crowd is so tickled with the idea that it ventures upon a laugh.

The laugh decides him, and stepping up alongside the sleeping child, he sings out: "The kid's mine, an' the man as laughs agin 'er laughs agin me. Now let's see 'im as is game to grin!"

He has evidently gone home, for no one answers.

* * * * *

Sunday morning, and "Dog" Kellarey's claim is the centre of attraction. The little arrival of the previous night plays about the tent door. The "Dog," fearing harm to her from this crowd of visitors, carefully defines his boundary, and threatens dire penalties on the head of any man who crosses it.

* * * * *

News, news!—great and glorious news!

News which runs like wildfire through the field, which flies from tent to tent, from the police cells on the hill to Dutch Joe's across the flat, past the Eureka, down to the Day-dawn, never stopping until everyone has heard it.

"Dog" Kellarey's proverbial bad luck has turned at last—he had bottomed on the lead, the new claim has turned up trumps with a vengeance.

It is full of gold-specks, specimens, and nuggets. Not nuggets as small as peas, but large as walnuts. Not here and there, but in a big deep lead, a fortune at every drive of the pick.

The Luck-penny, who has been sleeping in the shadow

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of the tent, watches and chuckles at a piece of glittering mica. In his excitement the "Dog" sings out:

"Boys! 'tis 'er 'as done it; there's the lass that brought me luck!"

* * * * *

Three p.m. More excitement.

A nugget weighing five pounds! The monster of the field, a wonder of the country, and a fortune to its finder.

Picks and shovels are thrown down, the roar of cradles and sluice boxes stops as if by magic, and the excited crowd starts at a run for the claim.

On their arrival "Dog" Kellarey says nothing, but the second time he carefully points out the boundary. He places his revolver on the cradle ready to his hand, and, bless you, the crowd understands what he means by that.

The Luck-penny sucks her thumb and crows contentedly; womanlike, she knows she is the centre of attraction.

When the last visitor has departed the "Dog" picks her up, and says emphatically:

"Kinchin! It's you as brought the luck to the old man. Now, look here, three parts of that claim belongs to you, it does!"

And he meant it.

1892.

A bright, fresh morning, with a few white clouds scattered about the heavens, the better to enhance the blueness of the sky beyond. A happy spring breeze dashing round corners, and playing the very mischief with silk hats and dainty skirts, whistling through telegraph wires, and covering the harbour with a coating of continuous white foam. A morning on which to feel thankful for existence.

It is easily seen that something unusual is affecting the inhabitants of Potts Point, that fashionable suburb of luxurious Sydney.

At St. Mary's Church door I find a large crowd assembled, representing all ranks of society, and, for the first time, obtain some dim idea of the event I am about to witness. In order to make doubly sure I question an ancient lady, whose dress suggests connection with some charitable institution.

At first she seemed inclined to treat my thirst for information with contempt, but finally a desire for gossip overcomes her reticence, and she condescends to tell me, all in one breath, that "This 'ere is to be the weddin' o' Miss Athelwood; not but that 'er name ain't Athelwood, but Kellarey. 'Er as 'dow'd the alms'ouses down the street, which, times bein' bad, and a lone widder, as 'ad no 'usband an' whose son is doin' 'is last stretch, bein' as innocent as a babe unborn. An' rheumatiz' bein' that bad, she could cry, only she wouldn't. And Miss O'Sullivan, as lives in No. 9, said as 'ow Miss Athelwood was worth well nigh 'alf a million of money if she was worth a penny, not but what she shouldn't be, seein' as 'ow she was born on the gold diggings' and every one knowed them was good times. And a prettier and better lady never stepped, beggin' 'er pardon for sayin' so."

The old woman, once started, was hard to stop. But I was interested in Miss Athelwood, so ventured an inquiry as to her parentage.

"Ah, well may yer say that; not but what yer mightn't understand, seein' as 'ow ye're a stranger in these parts. The poor, young dear never 'ad no father to know but Mr. Athelwood, the lawyer. I 'eard tell she were just fetched up from them goldfields by a feller called Kellarey—a miner chap, who give 'er to Mr. Athelwood along of a fortune which 'e said was 'ers. That's twenty year or more now—the same year as my good man was took by the perlice fer the Orange bushrangin' case, an, 'im not never so much as 'avin' a 'alfpenny of the money, but——"

I stopped the dear old lady's family history by asking whom Miss Athelwood was about to marry. As I put the question, an old and villainously dirty swagman placed his roll of blankets down at the church door and pushed his way towards us.

"In beggin' yer pardon," my lady went on, "Miss Athelwood's a-goin' to marry, as it's not in my mind to remember—a dook, or a hearl, but I can't say which on 'em. Haide-de-camp to the Governor they do say 'e is. But look! look! 'ere they comes!"

Carriage after carriage rolled up to the church door, and set down its load of fashionables. Then, amidst continuous cheering, Mr. and Miss Athelwood arrived. She looked surpassingly beautiful, and I noticed that the old swagman was so overcome with astonishment that he kept his eyes staring at the door long after she had passed through it and we had rushed into the church to see the ceremony.

My whole attention was devoted to watching the bride. I could not drive her romance out of my head. She went up the aisle a homeless girl, the product of a goldfield, and returned, to the music of Mendelssohn's "Wedding March," a Countess and a member of one of the oldest families in England.

After all the carriages had rolled away and I was turning to go, the old swagman touched my arm, saying:

"Mister! I'm goin' to get yer to do me a favour!"

Asking him what it was, he replied:

"Let's go somewhere out of this, where we're alone, an' I'll tell yer!"

When we had adjourned to a more fitting place my companion spoke:

"I fancy you'd call me a liar if I told you that I was the man who brought up that girl as we've just see married? But I am—I'm 'Dog' Kellarey, sure enough, 'im as give 'er into Lawyer Athelwood's 'ands twenty year ago, with 'er share of the mine that panned out so rich."

"Why don't you go to her, then? I hear she's been hunting high and low for you."

"That's just it; I know she has. But d'yer think I'm a-goin' into the company o' the likes o' 'er friends. Not me; I'd be making a fool o' the girl, and she'd be ashamed o' 'erself. No; I've tramped close on 400 miles to see 'er married, and now I'm a-goin' back into the Bush to-night for good, I want you to write this 'ere in a letter for me, it ain't much. Say, 'From "Dog" Kellarey to 'is Luck-penny on 'er weddin' day,' and put in the corner, 'I ain't forgot yer, mind!'"

I wrote as he directed, and inclosed—what do you think? A baby's little woollen shoe. The old man had kept this relic as his sacred treasure for twenty years.

ARNOLD REES.

In the issue of SHORT STORIES dated May 23rd will appear the opening chapters of a new serial story, entitled,

"THE WYTHECOMBE MYSTERY."

By Mr. JOHN K. LEYS, Author of "The Tenth of June," "The Lindsays," etc., etc.

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The Brain Gymnasium

NEW SERIES.

TWO PRIZES OF A GUINEA EACH.

BELOW we publish ten problems, forming the first of a new series of The Brain Gymnasium. Two prizes of a Guinea each will be awarded every week to those competitors who answer correctly the greatest number of these problems.

Consolation Prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

Competitors, in sending in their attempts, must observe the following conditions:

1. All solutions to be written clearly on one sheet of paper.
2. Do not write the questions; simply put the numbers and the answer against each.
3. Each set of attempts to contain the £100 coupon (found on the second page of cover) for the current week.
4. All attempts to be in by Monday, May 11th. Those received after this date will not be dealt with.
5. Mark your envelope "Gymnasium."

☞ It is improbable that you will be able to solve all the problems set, but send in as many as you can do. Those who solve *the greatest number* receive the prizes.

(1.) The following disjointed words, when placed in correct order, form a sentence to be found in a recent number of *Pearson's Weekly*. The punctuation marks are placed in their correct relative positions:

It will be every rate of speed that require and at high travelling then the sixty four signals an express engine passed travels at an miles will rate often an attention. can be constant understood train readily and hour, minutes, that of

(2.) By substituting a new letter for one already in the word, make a new word, and thus progress from word to word until the transformation is complete. The order of the letters may *in no way be altered throughout*. The number of moves in which the alteration is made should be placed against each, and those who succeed in transforming the following words in the fewest moves will be counted correct:

Example: *Rash* to *calm*. Rash—cash—cask—calk—calm. 4 moves.

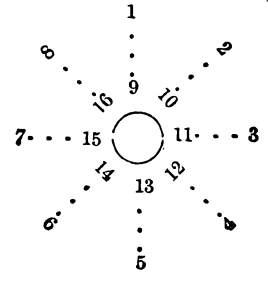
Transform:

(*a*) Cap to low.
(*b*) Slow to fast.
(*c*) Sword to rifle.
(*d*) Pound to penny.
(*e*) Careful to tatters.

(3.) The initials of the words defined below—each of which consists of four letters—form the name of a place marked on every map of the globe.

(*a*) A number under 20.
(*b*) To yield.
(*c*) The cry of a lion.
(*d*) A river of England.
(*e*) Not soft.
(*f*) Taken for medicinal purposes.
(*g*) To unseal.
(*h*) A part of the body.
(*i*) To acquire by service.

(4.) Each of the words defined below consists of five letters. Place them according to the instructions given:



From 1 to 9, gaiety.
,, 2 to 10, a country in Asia.
,, 3 to 11, a runner.
,, 4 to 12, to change.
,, 5 to 13, a Scriptural name, occurring in 1st Chron., Chap. V.
,, 6 to 14, water pitchers.
,, 7 to 15, a famous French astronomer.
,, 8 to 16, confederation.

The initial letters forming the perimeter of wheel (from 1 to 8 *via* 2) spell the name of a distinguished French statesman born March 9th, 1749.

The finals forming the hub of wheel (9 to 16 *via* 10) spell the name of a distinguished American statesman born in 1773.

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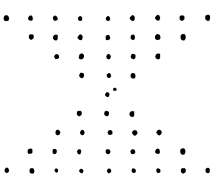
(5.) Assuming that a=5, b=10, e=15, i=20, o=25, t=26, and u=30, what word on this page is of the greatest numerical value, and what is that value? Hyphenated words to count as two:

Example: *Hyphenated* =61., made up as follows:

(*e*) = 15
(*a*) = 5
(*t*) = 26
(*e*) = 15.

61

(6.) HOUR GLASS.



Each of the dots given above represents a letter. Place the words defined below in the order in which they are given, and when written one under the other they will form a shape similar to the example.

1. Parsons. 2. The human race. 3. On every dinner-table. 4. A poem. 5. In hour glass. 6. A feminine name. 7. A beverage. 8. A scamp. 9. Speaking indistinctly.

The central letters, when read downwards, spell a word which means "to run away precipitately."

(7.) What single word on this page has the greatest number of different meanings? And what are they?

Example: *Page*, a boy attendant, one side of a leaf of a book, to number pages, etc.

(8.) CHARADE.

My first is a complaint indigenous to our climate.
My second is a running body of water.
My whole is the name of a British regiment.

(9.) WORD SQUARES OF FOUR LETTERS.

(*a*) Smart; a flower; surrounded by water; to come in contact with.
(*b*) Sullen; doctrine; a constellation; to infer.

(10.) Commence at the word in capitals, and, moving across the squares in the same way as a knight moves on the chess-board, connect up the words given below so that they form a verse of rhyme.

Golden	not	As	my	Why	Oh!	shakes	folded
chances	stay	Hair,	do	she	lady's	averted	stumbled,
keep	Lady	rose-bud's	that	as	her	lips.	her
tips	it	"DEAR	eyes:	am	mist	I	glances?
my	a	me	other	shrouds	Still	head	Tell
how	from	face	humbled!	Golden	I	Why	where
frowning	Tell	I	how	Tell	lady	me	there
fell	see	grace.	fair?	how	flies	me	disfavour

RESULT OF PICTURE PUZZLE COMPETITION.

BELOW will be found the names of the winners in the Picture Puzzle Competition announced in *Short Stories*, dated April 4th. In view of the small number of persons who have solved the problem under the conditions, it has been considered advisable to divide the prize amongst them, after adding 4s., with the result that each receives 17s.

Gold-plated pencil-cases have been sent to all those competitors who succeeded in putting the puzzle together within one square of being correct.

Mrs. G. Archer, 5, South Terrace, Bury Street, Lower Edmonton.

A. Hook, 9, Canterbury Place, Lambeth Road, S.E.

T. W. Garbutt, 35, Bright Street, Darlington.

H. Broadbent, 18, Finborough Road, South Kensington.

W. Simmonds, 16, Stockwell Street, Greenwich.

J. Cross, 34, Bentley Road, Kingsland Road, N.

C. Wilkins, 2, Claremont Villas, Tudor Road, Kingston Hill.

H. Cheeseright, 40, Granby Street, Liverpool.

T. S. Nunn, 10, Grecian Road, Tunbridge Wells.

C. G. Nancarrow, 267, Somers Road, North Fratton, Portsmouth.

H. Anderson, Naval Ordnance Office, Woolwich Arsenal.

G. T. Somerville, 17A, Great George Street, Westminster.

Here is the key:

23	11	86	16	84	22	10	88
17	74	64	12	43	24	49	53
27	37	58	35	87	81	66	1
69	39	57	78	12	36	29	76
41	63	55	14	3	47	62	82
85	8	6	9	15	4	83	34
42	28	79	44	13	56	59	2
72	75	51	30	61	7	59	32
88	20	48	45	65	71	50	60
26	25	5	90	18	31	54	40
70	73	77	19	33	68	49	80

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DRAWN BY LOT.

THE thirty-eight of us were confined in a large room, and it was the fourteenth day after the Spanish gunboat captured our little steamer before we received a hint of what fate had in store for us. Then an officer entered, called on us to pay strict attention, and announced that we were to be taken out and shot on the morrow. An hour later he returned to explain that he was mistaken. The gracious and merciful Spanish Government would be satisfied with six lives instead of thirty-eight. We had killed six of the crew of the gunboat, and it was to be a life for a life.

"Gentlemen, it will be by lot, of course," he continued, as he bowed and smiled on every hand, "and I am here to oversee the drawing. See! I have here thirty-two white beans and six black ones. I will put them in a cap, and each gentleman will step up and draw as his name is called.

When he had announced that all were to be shot I heard no lamenting. On the contrary, men moved about saying that it was what we had been expecting, and that we would die like men. Lips were compressed, but I did not see one pale face. This new announcement created something like a panic. Only six were to die. Thirty-two would be sent to prison, but all of them would live to see home and friends again. In sixty seconds the face of every man was ghastly. In two minutes all were trembling. Mild-eyed men glared about them like wild beasts driven to bay, and there were lips which bled from the hard-set teeth.

"Gentlemen, my clerk will call the roll, and you will draw the beans," said the officer as he made ready. "Each man must show his bean as he draws, and those who draw black ones must stand over by the windows. Now then, are you ready?"

The clerk could speak and write English, and he had our names in alphabetical order. The first name called was that of Anson, and he hesitated a few seconds before advancing. Did anyone hope he would draw a black bean? I believe that every man of us hoped so. It would better our own chances. The man walked slowly forward, made a great effort to control himself, and made his draw. It was a white bean.

Anderson came next, and he drew his death-warrant as did also Bagley. Then twelve men drew white beans in succession. When it came to my turn, there were two blacks and thirteen whites still left in the cap. I drew a black. That fact did not shock me, as I had almost expected my ill luck from the start, but it hurt me when the men almost applauded. Only one to thirteen now!

It was a singular fate which left that last black bean in the hat Thirteen names were called off, and thirteen men stepped up and drew, and each and all drew white. It was the death warrant of the only man who did not put his hand in the cap. As soon as the drawing was over the thirty-two fortunates shook hands and congratulated each other, and smiled, and laughed. That was only natural. After the first ebullition of feeling, they turned to give us their heartfelt sympathies. We were not removed from the room. They would come for us soon after daylight.

What were our feelings? The first sensation was that of a man coming to after a fall which had deprived him of consciousness for a minute. The next was to doubt if we had not been asleep and dreamed it all. After that one man sat down in a corner and wept. A second lay at full length on the floor with his face to the wall. A third cursed and inveighed and hoped for vengeance. Within three or four hours there came a feeling of exultation. I believe that every man who goes to the gallows has that same feeling. I was still sleeping when the soldiers came to march the six of us out to the execution ground. We shook hands all round, but only here and there did one of the men trust his voice to speak to us. Those who were to live seemed most affected. Their faces were very pale, and their lips quivered.

Two by two, with soldiers on every side, we walked with heads up, but had no word for each other. There were scores of citizens out to see us, but we kept our eyes to the front. Halt! We have reached the grounds. I had thought of the six of us standing in front of six new-made graves, but there were neither graves nor coffins. They stood us with our backs towards a brick wall, and we knew it had been made for just such occasions as this.

"Gentlemen, your eyes—the blindfold!" said an officer as he came forward with several men behind him.

The last thing I saw was a platoon of twenty-four men forming up in front of us—four to a man. For perhaps ten seconds I shrank at the thought of the bullets striking me. For perhaps ten more I prayed that they would make sure work of it. My hands touched the hands of the men each side of me, for we were not bound. I said "good-bye" to each, and they returned it, and I heard the others speaking a last farewell word. I heard the last man walk away when the last victim had been blinded. I heard the platoon moving up nearer. I heard one street boy shouting to another that the soldiers were about to fire. There was deep silence for a few seconds, and then I heard advancing footsteps. Some one seized my arm, and I was led away to the right and the handkerchief removed. It was the officer again, and he turned me over to two soldiers with the remark:

"He is but a boy, and the Governor commutes. Take him back to prison."

I had not gone 200 feet when there was a crash of musketry, and my five comrades lay dead at the base of the wall. Was I rejoiced? Strangely enough, no—not for hours and hours. I had been so near death that I was dead to myself and all around me.

S. L.

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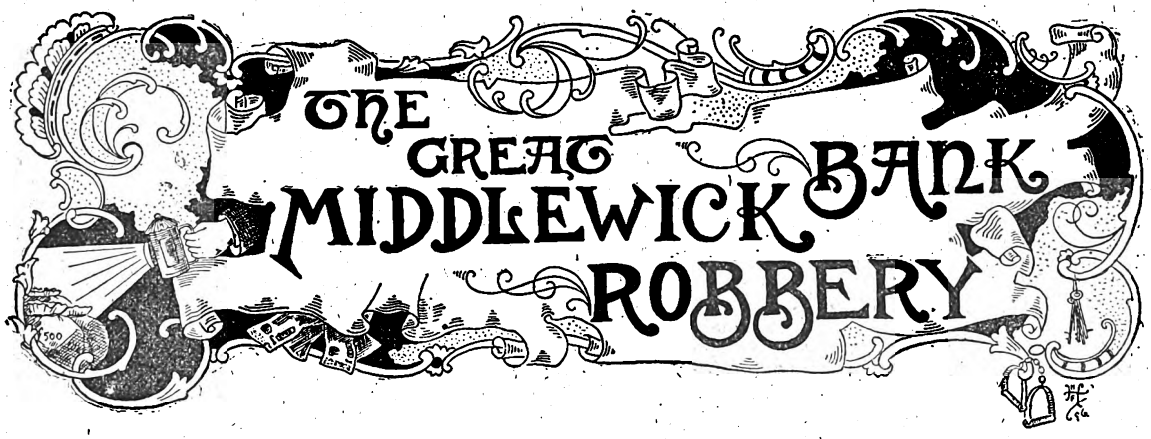

CHAPTER XVII.

The Escape.

Meanwhile, how was the detective getting along?

It was useless for him to lament his foolhardiness or regret the step that had brought this peril upon him. He was caught in the worst predicament of his life, and the question that confronted him was what could he do to help himself?

He paused at the bottom of the stairs and stood motionless until he heard the bolt slid into place. Then he listened to the murmur of voices, but could not distinguish what was said. It mattered not, for he felt no further interest in the conversation.

Drawing a match from the little silver box he always carried in his pocket, he struck it and began an exploration of his prison.

Several matches sufficed to make him as thoroughly acquainted with its interior as if it had been brilliantly lighted. He was surrounded by four thick stone walls, so compactly cemented that the cellar was as if hewn out of the solid rock.

The floor was of earth, quite hard, but susceptible to his pocket-knife. To tunnel under the walls and to the surface outside, however, would require days, and possibly weeks of unremitting work. He would perish with thirst and starvation meanwhile, for it was not to be supposed that his captors meant to furnish him with water and food. So that idea had to be abandoned.

The smallness of the two windows rendered them equally unavailable. It struck him as strange that the cellar contained no other entrance than the one he had used. Everything that had ever entered or been carried out of it was by means of the door at the top of the stairs.

Wishing to economise his supply of matches, which numbered hardly a dozen, he devoted half-an-hour to fingering the walls in different places in the hope of finding some loose stones that might be further displaced. Nothing of the kind presented itself.

He half suspected that when Roberts was left alone upstairs he would carry out his threat against him. The detective, therefore, fought shy of the foot of the steps, and held himself in readiness to retreat if the man appeared. He meant to compel Roberts to enter the cellar to complete his work, and in that event there was no saying what might occur.

Taylor was too active both in mind and body to remain idle; all he was waiting for was to discover the best means of helping himself. The subterranean prison contained absolutely nothing at all, not so much even as a log on which he could rest. In places the ceiling was so low that he was compelled to stoop slightly to avoid hitting his head against the cross beams. By standing up straight he could easily press the palms of his hands against the heavy boards which formed the floor, supported on the beams.

This fact decided his course of procedure.

Several more of the precious matches were used to help him examine the roof of the cellar. It may be said of the men who put together this old structure that they builded better than they knew. Here were the floors, and many portions as strong as on the day the edifice was completed.

Taylor determined to cut his way through the floor overhead to one of the rooms above. If he could do that and climb out of the cellar, he was ready to take his chance of escaping.

It need not be said that he selected the corner furthest from where the men were holding their council. The cellar did not extend under the kitchen, but reached to the front of the house. It was there the prisoner decided to begin his work.

The task was a most formidable one, for the only instrument at his command was his pocket-knife, whose sharp blades were so delicate that the utmost care was necessary to prevent their breakage while working in the dark. If it should prove that the boards composing the floor were dovetailed into each other, the difficulty of his task would be increased almost immeasurably.

But minutes were valuable, and Taylor had none to throw away. He had fixed the point where he meant to begin operations so clearly in his mind that it was continually before him, though working in the dark.

Using his left hand as a help to guide him, he began cutting the wood at right angles to the grain. It was easy to decide how large a space was needed to permit the passage of his body, and he set to work to open such a passage. It was fearfully slow work. The wood was oak, and had been seasoned by a century of use. It would take hours to cut through any portion of it, but it was far better to keep busy than to sit down and fold his hands in despair.

Taylor knew he was progressing, though it was exasperatingly slow work. The unusual position of his arm, all the while extended above his head, and the continuous pressure and movement of the fingers, after a time brought so great a fatigue to arm and hand that he was obliged to rest. In a few minutes, however, he was at it again, and thus the work went on through the long lonely hours of the night.

No one, unless similarly placed, can understand the tediousness and trying nature of the task. After a time Taylor's right shoulder began aching, and caused such intense pain that he shifted the knife to his left hand, in the hope of obtaining relief without losing time. But the detective was not ambidextrous, and to his dismay the first effort snapped the blade in two.

"Heavens!" he muttered, "that ruins everything."

He stood for a minute bathed in perspiration, though the

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cellar was chilly at that hour. But the despair in his heart quickly vanished, when he recalled that the knife contained two other blades, though one of them was the small file meant for the finger-nails, but which is generally more ornamental than useful.

Besides, more than half of the broken blade remained. The abrupt angle made by the fracture caused this to be tenfold more effective. Forgetting his aching shoulder, he applied the piece of steel with such vigour that he accomplished more in the next half hour than he had in double that time before the accident.

"It would have paid me to have begun by breaking all the blades," was his thought, though he did not adopt the method with either of the remaining ones.

At last, however, the hour came when he had to stop operations for a longer time than usual. He sat down on the damp floor, with his back against the wall, so tired that, after the aching in his shoulder had passed off, he imitated the man overhead—and went to sleep.

He opened his eyes after Roberts had departed. The cellar was filled with a faint light, caused by the sun's rays entering the small windows. Taylor started up at the thought that if Roberts had known of his unconsciousness he could have descended the steps and carried out his purpose again. However, nothing of the sort had been done, and it was useless to think of it.

As the detective scrambled to his feet and stretched his limbs he became aware of two uncomfortable facts, he was exceedingly hungry and thirsty. Inasmuch as nothing in the way of food or drink had been offered him, it was evident he was to be left to perish by one of the most miserable and lingering of deaths.

But that release could not come for several days, no matter how intense the suffering. Meanwhile he must work, work, work. And work he did, plying the knife till he could no longer hold it.

When the growing dimness of the light in the cellar, and a glance at his watch, told him that the day was drawing to a close, and the second night was near him, the task was not finished, though much progress had been made.

The prisoner had cut a deep gutter on the four sides of a square about a foot and a half in diameter. Around this hollow the knife had travelled again and again, eating a little further on each circuit, until he began to hope he had nearly penetrated the thickness of the boards in several places. He ceased cutting at one end, giving all his efforts to the other three sides. When they gave way it would be easy to snap off the remaining portion.

But night descended, and he was still at it. Every possible incentive urged him on. He knew the crisis at the Bank had come and gone long before. Jack Burton must be puzzled and alarmed over his absence, but could never dream of its explanation, and so was powerless to help him.

He was almost faint for want of food, but the only means of obtaining relief was by cutting his way out of his prison. He must keep at it, or die a lingering death.

More than once he thought of attacking the door, but that was considerably thicker than the floor before he began cutting it. Besides, he suspected that Roberts was waiting for such a pretext for firing upon him. No, he had hit upon the one and only course.

Finally, the wearied officer closed his knife and replaced it in his pocket. Then he put both hands against the square space inclosed by the deep furrow made by his knife, steadied himself and pushed upwards with all his might. The whole piece yielded as though it were an egg shell. A similar effort two hours before would have accomplished the same result.

With a thrill of hope the detective grasped the edges of the opening with both hands and drew himself through. Had he been sure of landing right among the four burglars he would hardly have hesitated. His prison had become so hateful that he felt he would have gone mad had he stayed longer in it.

The occasion warranted the use of one of the two remaining matches. His listening ear caught no evidence that his gaoler had heard or suspected what was done, so he did not fear to draw the match along the hard floor and look round him.

He had entered the large room which years before served as the parlour of the old stone house. Neither on the mildewed walls nor anywhere about the rooms was there any sign of pictures or furniture. For generations it had been deserted and bereft of everything except the wide, gaping fireplace, and the traces of what once had been.

Taylor moved quickly and softly across the floor to the door that led into the hall where he was playing the eavesdropper at the time of his capture. It opened readily, as did the outer door.

Within three minutes after he climbed through the opening in the roof of the cellar, he was in the fresh, glorious air outside. Happy, thankful, hopeful; but half mad with thirst and starvation.

Quickly he hastened down the road, and then, when satisfied that no one was observing him, he hurried to the clear little stream winding through the hollow, knelt down, and there quenched his thirst.

"I wonder whether there are enough provisions in Middlewick to give me the supper I want?" was his next thought, as he strode rapidly towards the town.

He was confident that disaster had overtaken the criminals, since, from what he knew of the preparations made, he could not well see how it could result otherwise. Besides, the profound stillness within the stone house he had just left was proof that the party had not carried out their scheme of hiding there. There could be but one explanation of this failure.

Like Roberts, who had preceded him, Taylor had not far to go before learning the truth. The attempt against the bank had not only failed, but three of the burglars were securely lodged in the county gaol.

That much learned, a great load was lifted from the detective's mind. He therefore went straight to the hotel, and, though the hour was late, ordered a meal befitting the physical condition of a man who had not tasted food for more than twenty-four hours.

While Jack Burton and Roberts were holding their interesting conversation upstairs, the gentleman into whose apartment they had intruded was coming up the stairs in a very comfortable frame of mind.

"Hulloa!" he said to himself, when he caught the glimmer of light beneath the door, "someone has made a mistake."

In accordance with his habits of caution he stepped softly, pausing in the corridor and listening.

"Hulloa! that's Burton's voice, I'm sure. Who is he talking to?"

A moment's patience and the question was answered.

"Bobby Roberts, as sure as I live. He's deserted his post and come down to my room. What on earth is he talking to Burton about?"

Taylor's position enabled him to catch every word, even though the speakers were talking in unusually low tones. At the crisis of the conversation, he pushed open the door, with the exclamation:

"There is no need of that; here he is."

Nothing could have shown the training of the two friends more strikingly than their course at this crisis.

Burton did not look round at the man whose voice he recognised. He did not forget that the ruffian in front of him was on the alert to seize any advantage the instant it presented itself. In the most matter-of-fact manner, Burton said:

"Alf, take his revolver out of his pocket."

"It will afford me great pleasure to do so. Hulloa! by Jingo! it's my own little beauty," he exclaimed, deftly removing and holding aloft the pistol before Roberts could have prevented, had he dared to do so.

"So you are here?" remarked the scamp, with a smile,

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looking in the face of his former prisoner; "we were just going after you."

"That doesn't seem necessary now," observed Burton, "but I gathered from what you said, Mr. Roberts, that my friend Alf had been wounded. I do not observe anything amiss with him."

"That was only a little joke of mine. I wouldn't have hurt such a courageous man for the world. I meant to excite your fears and then make you happy by showing how well we had treated your friend."

"If *he* had had his way," said Taylor, "he would have used his pistol on me long ago. But, Phil, what are you going to do with this gentleman? I don't want him in my room all night."

"We'll deliver him to the authorities, and let him join his friends in gaol."

Under the guard and custody of Burton and Taylor, Roberts was speedily lodged in as secure confinement as were those of his confederates who had preceded him to imprisonment.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Miss Denton Asks a Few Questions.

Jack Burton and Alfred Taylor had too much to discuss after delivering their prisoner to the authorities to think of retiring for a long time. In the first place Taylor gave a minute account of all that had befallen him after his disappearance on the preceding evening. Burton listened without a question, but indulged in a smile at some of the grotesque features of his friend's experience. He uttered no word of reproach. It was not his habit to do that, for everyone is liable to make a mistake.

It took Burton a shorter time to relate all that could interest his friend respecting the four men who had been secured.

"Now, as the case stands," he added, "we are back again precisely at the point where we started several days ago."

"In what respect?"

"Think. The episode of the burglars—that is, Nash, King, and Co.—is only a parenthesis in the flow of incidents; it is a side issue—nothing to do with the main question."

Taylor nodded his head.

"You were sent for a few days ago by Mr. Bryant to try to clear up the mystery of the missing thousands. You and I both came. Just as matters were assuming shape, four of our old acquaintances took it into their heads to rob the bank that had just suffered a big loss. 'Twas the oddest coincidence I ever knew, and but for the preceding burglary the quartette would have made a nice haul."

"And not one of the four yet understands how we happened to be in Middlewick at the time of their visit."

"And probably never will; they will all be somewhat older, if not wiser, men than they are to-night when they get out again. But business is business——"

"Which reminds me," interrupted Taylor. "I wonder whether that fellow took away any of my documents."

He made a hasty examination of his portmanteau, but so far as he could ascertain nothing was missing.

"He didn't find what he was looking for," suggested Burton.

"It doesn't look as if he did, though I don't see how anything of mine in the way of papers can help him. But I interrupted you."

"You remember the papers which you brought from Mr. Bryant's house, Alf?"

"Yes; I left them with you."

"I have them," said Burton, drawing the package from an inner pocket, and spreading its contents out on the table.

"They contain a good specimen of the handwriting of Rutherford, the Middlewick Bank book-keeper."

"And also a letter of Mr. Bryant, and the missive that was pushed under the door of the Bank when you and I were sitting in the building. We will make another comparison of them."

"Shall I try it first?"

"If you please. Let me know your conclusion."

"That has already been reached."

"Possibly you may revise it," was Burton's quiet remark, as he leaned back in his chair.

Taylor spent several minutes in carefully studying the several papers, but he did it only to oblige his friend.

"What is your second decision?" asked Burton.

"The same as the first."

"And that is——?"

"I pride myself upon being somewhat of an expert in reading chirography."

"Did you ever know of three experts reaching the same conclusion?"

"I don't understand what you are hinting at," remarked Taylor, taking up the papers again and glancing at them.

"You have not yet fully answered my question as to what your conclusion is."

"I never knew a person who could successfully disguise his handwriting for any length of time. He may work out a few words or sentences that will mislead you, but when it comes to a page of note or foolscap he is sure to betray himself. The person who pushed that letter under the door took every pains to conceal his handiwork, but half way down the page he drops into some mannerisms that betray him. My conclusion is that the same hand that wrote that purposely mis-spelled letter is the same that wrote *this*."

"You feel no doubt on that point?"

"Not the slightest."

"All the same, Alf, *you are wrong*."

"Impossible! You can never make me believe that."

"Oh yes, I shall, and in a few minutes, too. Study that paper in your hand more closely, and you will find that the writer not only attempted to disguise his handwriting, but strove still harder *to make it resemble the writing of someone else*."

"What in the name of goodness would he do that for?"

"He knew the note would pass under the critical eye of such experts as ourselves, and he meant to divert suspicion to an innocent party."

"You must be mistaken, Cairns," exclaimed Taylor, who, without noticing it, dropped into the habit of addressing his friend by the name to which he was more accustomed than that of Jack Burton.

"Let us see," said the latter, drawing his chair closer to the table.

He then proceeded to point out what might with truth be called microscopic evidences of his remarkable declaration. There were plenty of them, and few indeed would have detected what, to Burton, was as plain as day. But if ever there was a marvellous expert at that sort of business, Cairns was the man. Taylor's skill was that of a child compared with it.

He was still engaged at his task when Taylor interrupted.

"Enough! You're right. But heavens, what is the conclusion?"

"I need not name it. If I am right, and you know that I am, only one conclusion is possible."

For a few seconds both were silent; but they understood each other.

"Cairns," said the other, almost in a whisper. "There's another party whom we ought to see."

"Who's that?"

"Old Warren, the watchman, who was discharged and then taken back again. He must have an interesting story to tell if he can only be got to tell it."

"You're right, for he's told it."

"To whom?"

"To me."

"And what is it?"

"That on the night the twenty thousand pounds were taken from the vault of the Middlewick Bank, and previous

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to the visit of the thief, Warren was drugged, though he never suspected it."

"How could that be?"

Burton then told his friend of his visit to the old watchman and what he revealed of the medicine given to him for his rheumatism.

"When I held the empty phial to my nose I detected the odour of laudanum. Perhaps he caught a glimmer of the truth from my manner, but he is too slow of intellect to comprehend the shameful trick that was played on him."

"And he gave you the name of the party."

"He had been cautioned not to do so, and had pledged himself he would not. No bribe or threat could induce him to break his word, but, Alf, it wasn't necessary; I'm glad he didn't tell me his name."

"So am I," was Taylor's reply. "What's the next thing to be done?"

"Go to bed. It's past two o'clock; no need to hurry up in the morning. Good-night."

Back in his own room once more, Jack Burton was soon in bed and fast asleep. Taylor, on the contrary, lay awake a long time, disturbed by torturing meditations over what had taken place within the preceding two or three days, supplemented by the astounding knowledge that had come to him that evening through his friend in the adjoining room. But at last he, too, became unconscious, and he did not wake until the morning was well advanced.

"Alf," said Burton, in his sharp, business-like way when they met again after breakfast in Taylor's room. "Mr. Bryant must have wondered where you were on the night of the burglary. I haven't had time to explain matters to him, and had I had the time I shouldn't have known how to have done so. Hadn't you better call in and see him?"

"What shall I say?"

"I see no objection to your telling the truth. You may not feel very proud while doing so, but you needn't say much about how neatly the tables were turned upon you. Make it appear that you overcame your four enemies single-handed."

"I don't suppose he'd believe me, but still I'll do as you suggest."

"I'm afraid I shan't be here when you come back. It all depends. Before I decide upon what is to be done to-day I must consider matters."

Upon reaching Mr. Bryant's house the detective was told he was out, but expected back every moment. It was his niece, Miss Denton, who made this explanation, and invited the caller inside so cordially that Taylor accepted, and found himself alone with her. With some hesitation she said:

"You will pardon me, Mr. Taylor, but my uncle, who has few secrets from me, has told me your errand in Middlewick. That being the case, and feeling as deeply interested as he in your success, may I ask how you are progressing with your search for the parties who stole the large amount of money some nights ago?"

The visitor was somewhat surprised at this direct question, but he noted the distressed expression of her countenance, and answered:

"Such work, you know, Miss Denton, is very difficult and fails more often than it succeeds."

"I suppose," she remarked, "that it is wrong to feel pity for those who commit such crimes, but it always saddens me to hear of them. There may be so many palliative circumstances of which we can know nothing: a starving family, misfortune, or some sudden overwhelming temptation repented of as soon as yielded to, but not soon enough to save the erring one."

"True, and human judgment being fallible must not be condemned too harshly. It is more often right than wrong, and such as it is, it is the only thing that can make property and life safe."

"Do you think it right," asked the young lady, the flush on her face deepening, "to allow the guilty parties in a case of this kind to escape prosecution?"

"I am not sure I understand you?"

"I am not sure that I understand myself, but what I wish to ask is whether you can conceive of a set of circumstances in which you, as an officer of the law, would recommend that a wrong-doer should not be punished for what he has done?"

"Yes, I can imagine such. Suppose, for instance, the men who took the £20,000 from the Middlewick Bank should voluntarily give it up—why, having made all the restitution in their power, there is morally no crime, though technically they have violated the law."

The detective shook his head.

"Suppose they should offer to surrender a *portion*?"

"You must see, Miss Denton, that in such a case there is a double crime, and the demoralising sin of compounding a felony, as it is called, is committed."

"Is such a course never justifiable?"

"It is hard to conceive such an instance."

"But cannot some good be accomplished?"

"Possibly it might, so far as a single individual is concerned; but evil is encouraged. Those who consent thus to compromise with wickedness are incited by the basest motives, for they not only profit themselves, but help to protect the wrong-doers. No; the most severe punishment should be visited upon those who trifle with right."

The detective's heart ached while uttering these sentiments, for he saw how they agitated the girl to whom he was repeating them. She was a high-spirited, conscientious young lady, but, in common with her sex, her judgment had become warped by her devotion. There was something in the situation which touched her feelings more than anything that she had yet experienced. She looked up abruptly with the question:

"Do you think you will succeed in discovering the persons guilty of this wrong?"

"You must understand that it is impossible to answer that question, except by saying that *I hope* to do so. Your uncle has instructed me to spare neither effort nor expense in the undertaking."

She made no comment on this, and he rose to his feet. His wishes had undergone a change during the brief interview. He no longer desired to meet Mr. Bryant, and fearful that if he remained longer he would do so, he bade the young lady "Good-day" and withdrew.

(To be continued.)

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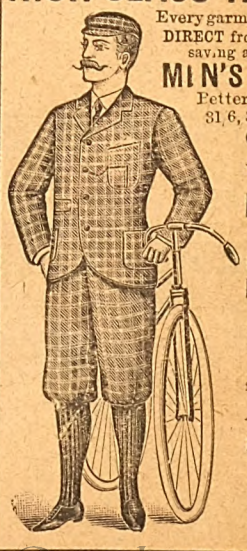

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Short Stories
EDITED BY ARTHUR PEARSON.
No. 385.] For the Week ending May 16th, 1896. [One Penny.

THE LITTLE WHITE MONKEY.

"BUT, Colonel——"

"No, I tell you! I am sorry to refuse you, but your continual absences have been noticed in the regiment. Hereafter you must remain here."

"But, Colonel——"

"No, I say; you cannot go!"

"But, Colonel, I want only twenty-four hours——"

"Ah! I see, to pass the day at Paris. What do you do in Paris? Women, women, of course, always women! Bah! it's sickening how the young men of to-day plunge into such stupidities! Woman is an inferior, mischievous being who should be stricken absolutely from the life of every man—particularly an officer's. Read, work, do what you please here, but as for going elsewhere, give up all thought of it. Do you understand?" And Colonel Belpoygne put his horse to the trot.

Crushed and disconsolate, Marcel returned to his company. Never before had the Colonel shown himself so stubborn, so whimsical. Worse than all, never had he been known to reverse a decision. No more leaves of absence It was settled; Marcel knew it, and also that Zoe would be waiting for him. For he had already written her that he would be at the circus that evening. She would look for him in his usual place—one of those stools with which the *habitués* of the place loved to encumber the passage—the third to the left, near the entrance to the boxes.

Since the opening of the circus he had never missed a Saturday, and he had always witnessed Zoe's arrival, breathless and smiling, finishing dressing as she ran, in order to have time to give him a greeting before her number. This evening she would not find him.

The devil fly away with the Colonel! And Marcel, scowling and fuming, gazed with an irritated eye at his chief spiritedly caracoling before him, content with the small lecture delivered and wholly indifferent to the pain he had given. Kind and considerate when what he called his "dignity" was not in question, he was wholly intractable when it was, or he fancied that it might be. Nevertheless, his regiment loved him, in spite of the occasional tempests of anger that swept impartially the entire quarter, and he loved his men and permitted many a small lapse and peccadillo to pass unnoticed upon the score of human weakness, so long as it did not reflect upon the regiment. But women—ah! you have heard his lecture to Marcel; it only remains to add that so far—and they had watched him ceaselessly—not a single weak spot of this kind had the regiment been able to discover in the armour of their gallant but irascible Colonel. None knew that better than Marcel himself; but to-day—to-day of all days—the Colonel had been so hard, so fierce, so utterly, unreasonably cranky—truly it smacked of a hidden motive. A hidden motive? Exactly; but what?

Marcel was still revolving this conundrum, when re-entering the court of the quarter to view his company going past, he chanced to stop near his chief, at the moment talking to the sergeant-major.

"Then," said the latter, listening respectfully, "you go to-night, Colonel?"

"Yes, to Mans, to shoot partridges. I shall not be back before Monday morning."

Marcel smothered a cry of joy; a ray of light had pierced the darkness.

Could he get himself excused from the weekly "call" and fly to Paris by the seven p.m. express, he would still be in time for Zoe's entrance; next morning he could return before the mess hour and no one would ever suspect his little trip.

Drill hour over, Marcel wasted no time in getting to his room; he lathered himself with rice-powder, sketched with burnt cork and a wad of cotton a consumptive circle under each eye, and then, with a last satisfied glance at the mirror, betook himself to the yard where they were grooming the horses.

The officer of the day, a good soul risen from the ranks, was there inspecting the process.

"Heavens, lieutenant," he cried, as he caught sight of Marcel, "but you have a face on you!"

Marcel groaned dismally, responding feebly: "Headache, captain, and a regular corker——"

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"The sun this morning, doubtless. Better go in again, utenant, and lie down a while——"

"Lie down! To get up again immediately?"

"For the 'call,' you mean? Oh, I'll excuse you. Go , go in, I say, man; I order you. A good night's sleep ill cure that head of yours."

And Marcel, inwardly delighted, obeyed, explained to his orderly that if they came to ask news of him, he would be "sleeping" profoundly till eleven the next morning, then dressed himself leisurely and arrived at the station just in time to leap into the train. He had encountered no one; seven o'clock was the dinner hour, and besides, it was already quite dark.

At the first stop they made he got out, lighted a cigar, and began to pace the platform, glancing carelessly as he passed at the interior of the coaches. Suddenly he stopped, stared, and sprang back as if confronted by a ghost. There, by the open door of the coach at his elbow he had seen the face of Colonel Belpoygne, who was sleeping peacefully.

By what strange hocus-pocus did Colonel Belpoygne, who had gone to shoot partridges at Mans, lie sleeping in the express for Paris? Had he found out his —Marcel's—absence and taken the train to catch him? Was he really asleep now, or only feigning? But why, if chasing Marcel, should he be in a dress-suit? And in a dress-suit the Colonel certainly was, as anyone could see through the open buttons of his pearl-grey top-coat —a top-coat that he wore only on state occasions.

Marcel, deeply curious, returned to his own compartment, not to leave it again till Paris was reached and he had seen the Colonel pass before him at a smart walk, valise in hand.

More and more curious and puzzled, Marcel, in his turn, started off at a run, dined at a noted café, and at half-past nine sharp entered the circus building. The scene, in spite of the season, was a brilliant one. A tour of the stable assured him that Zoe had just arrived and had gone to her room to dress. So he strolled out into the corridor to glance over the hall.

A painful surprise awaited him. There, facing him in the front row, the "bald-heads' row" the world over, Colonel Belpoygne and his pearl-grey top-coat were majestically established. This second appearance of the Colonel dumfounded Marcel; decidedly the old gentleman was tracking him. And yet, how came he possessed of a stall—a stall on a Saturday evening, at that? Evidently he had engaged the stall, and having engaged the stall, as evidently he had premeditated the trip. Something was behind all this. Meanwhile it was prudent to make his escape and to warn Zoe, just then coming from her *boc* to answer her "call."

"I'll be caught, you know, dearest, if I stay," said he, explaining breathlessly; "my Colonel's here; meet me after the performance at the waffle-man's stand." And he hurried away with a heavy heart.

Not that she was so very beautiful, this little Zoe, whose hair was neither brown nor blonde, neither curly to the eye nor soft to the touch; whose mouth was wide and filled with teeth of a dazzling brilliancy; whose limbs—rare things in circus women—were marvels of symmetry as well as suppleness; and whose skin, of a clear milky whiteness, had given her the name, "the little white monkey," by which she was "billed" throughout the city. Droll, frolicsome, irritating, charming, Venus herself would gladly have exchanged her straightest lines for Zoe's captivating angles.

Prompt to the minute at the appointed place, Marcel saw a *coupé* draw up to the kerb and a little hand emerge from it, apparently beckoning him. He hesitated a second; this carriage, so different from the modest *fiacre* that habitually carried Zoe, confused him slightly.

"You did not wish to come with me, then?" Zoe cried reproachfully. "Am I late, and are you vexed? But truly, truly, Marcel dearest, it was not my fault—I could not get away from him."

"Him?"

"An old stupid who worries me half to death—but wait, not now, I'll tell you all later."

"No, no, now, Zoe; tell me now. I cannot wait. How does he worry you so?"

"The same old story—love, riches, money, this *coupé*, everything I want, in exchange for—myself. But let's talk of other things—of to-morrow, how we shall spend it, you know. At home, I think, quietly; then, on Monday, the races, which I'm crazy to see."

"Ah! If we could, Zoe; but I must be at barracks by eleven to-morrow. I told you that I had run away; that the Colonel had refused me leave—forbade me, in fact, to come."

"What! Your Colonel is as selfish as that, yet comes himself to Paris to enjoy the circus?"

"A feather would have floored me when I saw him there—he, the Colonel, with his horror of all women!"

"Eh? Of all women?"

"Of all women. 'Inferior, mischievous beings,' he calls them, and refuses to admit that others may think differently."

"And your weekly leaves of absence?"

"Are at an end—done for."

Zoe began to laugh.

"The animal! The stupid, hard-hearted, hard-headed old—old goose!" she cried. "But don't worry yourself, Marcel, you'll get your leaves. Rest easy, we'll see what we'll see!" And Zoe began to laugh again.

Next morning, as Marcel sat gloomily thinking how little that evening was going to resemble the last, his room door opened and the waggon master handed him a letter. It was from Zoe, and ran thus:

"Arrange, Marcel, dearest—no matter how—to be in Paris, Thursday next, and at my house at nine a.m. sharp; there a note will tell you what to do. You will be free to return at noon, if you wish. Should they refuse you leave, come without; you must, for on this depends all our good times to come. Find inclosed a thousand kisses.

"ZOE."

This strange missive greatly perplexed Marcel. What in the world was the little monkey up to? Had she taken it into her head to arrange an interview for him with the minister of war? One thing was certain, if she had, she would have the interview, for, somehow or other, she always had her own way.

So Thursday morning at the hour named—written leave of absence in hand this time—Marcel found himself bowling comfortably along in a little uncovered cab to Zoe's house. Suddenly, just ahead of him, he recognised the form of Colonel Belpoygne. He again! This was decidedly unnatural!—and, with a word to the coachman, Marcel made up his mind to follow his superior officer, who was mounted, like a centaur, on a splendid cob, built like a bull, but which, all the same, bowed a trifle under the Colonel's two hundred pounds. He presently dismounted, called the stableman at the

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door of the circus to take his mount, and passed into the building by the private entrance.

"By George!" cried Marcel, staring, "can it be a rendezvous? Pooh, nonsense! Some horse-trade, doubtless." And Marcel drove on, while the Colonel was asking of the Cerebus at the door, "If Mdlle. Zoe had arrived yet?"

"Not yet, monsieur," the man responded, evidently well acquainted with the applicant for admittance; "she has a new act, and practises late to-day, you know, Colonel. Come in, sir, please, and wait a while."

Crossing the passage, the Colonel seated himself, as usual, in the front row of the empty circle, and to kill the time, mechanically began to inspect the curious spectacle that a circus presents of a morning. A stirring scene it is, too, especially when, as now, a "new act" was to be tried. Everyone, workers and idlers, comes in to see it, eager to know how the other will do, and from eight in the morning till one there is an endless, perpetual going to and fro, of artisans and players, clowns and jugglers, horses and riders, and, high over all, the vicious snap of the ring-master's guiding whip.

Colonel Belpoygne, interesting himself in the varied accoutrements—the hoops, banners, swings and trapezes—giving advice upon a thousand and one things that he had never before heard of, was beginning, nevertheless, to find the time long, when presently Zoe appeared. He rushed to meet her.

"At last!" he cried.

"I know—I know I'm late," she answered, red and breathless with hurry; "but I met someone and——"

"And forgot with this 'someone,'" broke in the Colonel with plaintive reproach, "the poor friend so ardently and anxiously awaiting you here?"

"On the contrary, I thought of you all the while he detained me."

"Truly?"

"Truly. But I must go and dress; it won't take me a minute."

Zoe reappeared, droll and charming in her working costume; tights of sky-blue, a short blouse of blue merino, clasped at the waist by a band of flexible silver; her short, frizzled hair floating free; her fresh, white, eighteen-year-old skin—ah! But the little white monkey was indeed a pretty sight.

Dazzled, open-mouthed, the poor Colonel stared at the strange little creature; never before had a woman affected him as this one did. He started, trembled, and made wild dabs at her, as, from time to time, she passed before his chair, whirling and gaily pirouetting on the back of the old white horse that served her as a practice steed.

"Look out!" he cried; "take care—you'll fall!"

"I fall? Never!" Zoe responded, quitting the rail of the circle upon which she had just jumped. "Truly, my Colonel, it isn't at all dangerous; you know how perfectly our horses are trained. To prove it, try yourself!"

"Try? Try what?" cried the Colonel, affrighted.

"Standing up on a horse."

"I—on a circus horse! Never in the world!"

"I insist on it."

"Impossible! My dear Zoe, think what you suggest!"

"I do, perfectly. You ask a favour of me. Well, favour for favour, you know, and the one condition upon which I consent to your wish. Besides, there's the safety-belt—you shall have that on"—Zoe sunk her voice to that tender, coaxing cadence so irresistible to a lover's heart—"and you will do this for me—to give me a pleasure—who loves you so much! There isn't the slightest danger, I assure you. The belt—the belt, Mr. Clarke, and bid them bring Jules, please."

"Jules?" murmured the Colonel, nearly swooning in his shoes; "who is—Jules?"

"Oh, the old ring 'hack' that all, even the children, ride, and kick and thump as much as they please."

"But, Zoe, if I lend myself to this madness, you swear——"

"I swear, yes," cried the little monkey, slipping her hand into the Colonel's great palm, but neglecting to specify as to what she swore.

Jules, a great roan thoroughbred, was still a tolerably superb ruin. Humiliated at first by his descent to the ring, he finally submitted. He had resigned himself to bear everthing but—the Colonel. He was the unexpected, the unforeseen; and when he mounted, with the assistance of the riders, to the pad on his back, Jules squatted and spread out his legs, believing that his last hour had come.

The people shouted, the Colonel groaned; after which they began to put him through his exercises; first, the tour of the ring, seated at a gentle trot. Then, with her own hands, Zoe adjusted the safety belt—a girdle, with a ring through which ran a cord to a swinging pulley; the rider held one end, the cord swung with the horse, and the rider, by its support, was able to recover his balance should he slip, and thus avoid a fall.

Here, however, the Colonel rebelled. "Halter his legs in that cursed string!" He swore he never would—swore it—then did it at Zoe's whisper—Zoe inundating him with glances full of promise, and murmuring pleadingly in his ear:

"One hoop, just one hoop, Colonel—one hoop and a banner!"

"One hoop and a banner," was it, that Zoe had said? Why one—two—four—eight—ten—twelve, the Colonel counted hastily; the entire garniture topping off with a yellow paper moon, was blocking the way. Yes, blocking it absolutely, with Zoe whispering now in his ear: "All of them—all of them, Colonel—hoop, and banner, and——"

Well, whatever it was she told him, it turned him as red as a poppy, and set Jules off again in slow, cadenced gallop round and round the ring, a groom running at his head and Mr. Clark pulling sturdily on the safety rope, to the end of which swung easily the Colonel's stalwart form.

How was it done? Heaven knows! A leap, a scramble, a clutch of the man, the banderolles were passed, and for Zoe's victim there remained but the big yellow moon, one side of it in the grasp of the clown, the other——

There was no time to see him; the moon was on him, the Colonel's head through the tissue, Jules at a standstill, and a voice, calm, polite, respectful—*the voice of Marcel*, the clown's *vis à vis* with the moon—solicitously murmuring at his elbow: "I trust that you have enjoyed yourself, Colonel?"

It was playing for high stakes; but Belpoygne was a man of spirit, and he took his punishment like a soldier.

"My dear child," said he, turning to Zoe, "if you meant to teach me a lesson, you have succeeded."

"My dear Colonel," the white monkey responded sweetly, "I wished only to show you that women are not 'inferior beings;' also, how needless is the pain you give us both when you refuse Marcel leave of absence."

Which, I need not add the Colonel, whether from prudence or a better motive, did not refuse again.

LE VIER.

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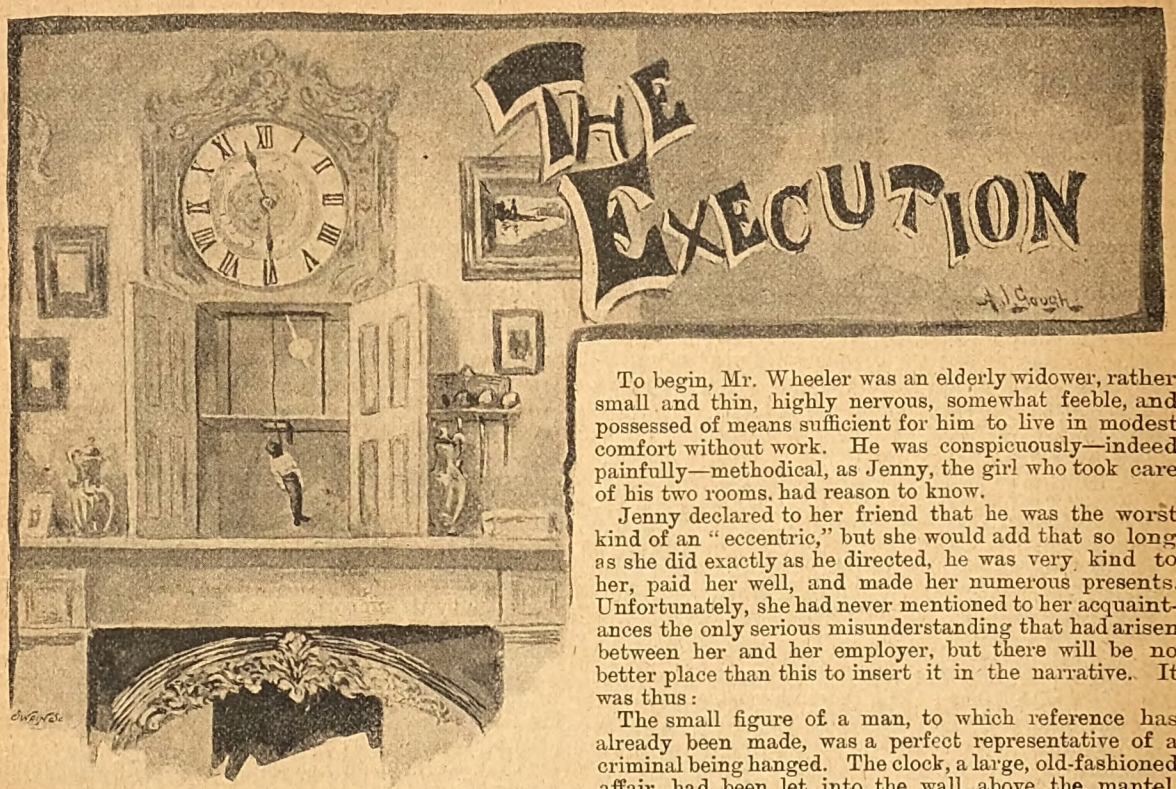

Mr. Austin Wheeler was startled out of his ten o'clock nap by a peculiar cry of distress from Theophilus, his cat. Wise in the ways of cats, and experienced in all the vocal expressions of Theophilus, Mr. Wheeler had cause to feel alarm when, upon opening his eyes, he saw the cat staring straight past him, every nerve in the large brindled animal's body on the strain, the hair along his spine upright, his tail slowly swinging to and fro, his ears rigidly fixed in listening, his eyes glowing with an unwonted light, and that low note of alarm, caution, or distress—perhaps all three in one—filling the chamber with its uncanny effect. It was such a sound as you may have heard cats give when worried by dogs.

Mr. Wheeler was wide awake in a moment. At first he supposed that the cat was looking at him; but when, in straightening himself from a reclining position, he had brought his face some two feet out of the cat's line of vision, and observed that Theophilus kept his gaze steadily as before, and, moreover, gave no heed to a call, Mr. Wheeler sent his glance in the direction of the cat's, and, as nearly as he could judge, found it to rest upon the clock. Instantly he made the startling discovery that instead of sleeping ten minutes, as had been his unbroken custom for years, he had really slept two hours, for the hands of the clock indicated midnight. More than that, he noticed that the little figure of a man which hung by the neck just below the clock was still quivering, as though it had but that moment dropped to the end of its string, whereas it should have been perfectly still.

That the nature of the shock which these discoveries gave Mr. Wheeler may be understood, it is necessary to explain one or two things.

To begin, Mr. Wheeler was an elderly widower, rather small and thin, highly nervous, somewhat feeble, and possessed of means sufficient for him to live in modest comfort without work. He was conspicuously—indeed painfully—methodical, as Jenny, the girl who took care of his two rooms, had reason to know.

Jenny declared to her friend that he was the worst kind of an "eccentric," but she would add that so long as she did exactly as he directed, he was very kind to her, paid her well, and made her numerous presents. Unfortunately, she had never mentioned to her acquaintances the only serious misunderstanding that had arisen between her and her employer, but there will be no better place than this to insert it in the narrative. It was thus:

The small figure of a man, to which reference has already been made, was a perfect representative of a criminal being hanged. The clock, a large, old-fashioned affair, had been let into the wall above the mantel, bricks having been removed in number sufficient to make the face of the clock flush with the wall. The ragged edges of the mural incision had been smoothed with plaster, which made a neat juncture with the wooden frame of the clock. The excavation had been extended below the clock, forming a narrow niche for the reception of the figure. In this niche, attached to the bottom of the clock, was a miniature gallows with beam, trap-door, cord, trigger, and the other essential mechanical devices employed in executions, everything being concealed by doors.

At half-past eleven o'clock every night, the mechanism of the clock would open the doors and spring the trigger, whereupon the trap-door would fly open and the little figure would fall through and hang suspended by the neck. The figure was neatly dressed in black, with a white shirt; its arms were strapped to its sides, its hands to its thighs, and its knees and also its feet together. To complete the picture, a hangman's black cap was drawn over the head, concealing the face.

Having accidentally opened the doors and seen the figure one day, Jenny cherished an uncontrollable curiosity to see the face. It so happened that she had never seen the figure hanging, for that was always at half-past eleven at night. For that matter, she did not know that the trap ever opened. All that she had ever seen was the figure standing rigidly on the gallows waiting to be hanged. But the gruesome picture of the little man standing there had always fascinated her, even after her original sentiment of horror and repulsion had passed. Accordingly, one day, when she knew that Mr. Wheeler had left for a stroll and to give her opportunity to put his room in order, and when experience

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with his ways made her sure that he would not return for two hours, she cautiously began an investigation.

Finding that the figure stood squarely upon its feet, without lateral support, she gently lifted it from the trap-door and drew it out as far as the cord would permit. She carefully loosened the noose, which was outside the cap and which pressed it closely against the neck, and then slipped off the cap. That which she then saw gave her so terrible a fright that she dropped the figure, screamed with all her might, and dropped in a senseless heap to the floor. There she lay unconscious for two hours, and there her master found her. Upon seeing at a glance what had happened, he became pale, and a look of singular ferocity and malignity distorted his features. With his foot he contemptuously turned the girl over, in order to get her out of his way, readjusted the cap and noose, and restored the figure to its original position, and then picked up Jenny, laid her on a lounge, loosened her clothing, sprinkled water in her face, and brought her back to consciousness.

After she had remembered what had happened, and had seen the hard, reproachful glance with which Mr. Wheeler was regarding her, she began to cry and to plead for forgiveness.

"Had you forgotten," he asked, "that I had particularly cautioned you never to touch that figure?"

"Oh, sir," she sobbed, "I am so sorry! It was very wrong of me, sir. You have been so good to me! Won't you forgive me, sir?"

The end of it was that he did forgive her, and that she promised faithfully never to tell any one what she had seen. But it was many a day before she could again enter that room without fear and shudderings. The slow, measured ticking of the clock was terrible, and the little figure standing behind its closed doors was a silent and formidable mystery. A thousand times did she wonder what it all meant—what dreadful history is illustrated. For months all her dreams were haunted by that terrible realistic little face, every detail of its strangely handsome features, distorted and discoloured though they were by death from strangulation, being impressed ineffaceably on her memory. In a vague fashion there had come to her certain stories of a strange tragedy far back in the life of her master—something about a beautiful young wife many years ago, and her death, and her husband's terrible revenge; but what all that had to do with the ghastly little figure in the clock, if anything at all, Jenny could not imagine.

When Mr. Wheeler, after having been awakened by Theophilus, saw that he had slept two hours instead of ten minutes, and that the body of the litt'e figure was still quivering, as though it had but just fallen through the trap, he was thrown into alarm and consternation. He had never overslept a moment before. Exactly at ten o'clock every night he had taken a nap of ten minutes in his chair, had read till eleven, and then had turned to face the clock and steadily watch the hands as they slowly went round to thirty minutes past eleven, when the little doors would spring open and the figure would drop to the end of its cord, and there sway awhile, turn slowly about as a man would in its place, and finally come to rest; then Mr. Wheeler would slowly replace the figure, close the doors, and go to bed.

On this night of his great surprise, Mr. Wheeler, at first unable to trust the evidence of his senses, felt his pulse, and, finding it bounding with alarming violence, concluded that he was ill, and that his illness had caused him to oversleep. But what explanation could be found for the singular conduct of the cat and the swaying of the figure? Mr. Wheeler examined the doors of his rooms and found them locked—no one could have entered. No draught which might have made the body sway after it should have been still nearly half-an-hour was discoverable. Nothing that might have caused the cat's uneasiness was visible. Could it be possible that some supernatural agency was at work?

Mr. Wheeler was too hard-headed a man to entertain that idea for a moment. So he finally tried to satisfy himself with the explanation that he had been taken ill in the first minutes of his slumber; that Theophilus had become uneasy at his long sleep and this violent breach of his habits, and, associating the clock with his master's movements, had regarded it as the cause of the irregularity; and that as for the swaying of the figure it might have been caused by a fly or some other insect, and that this untimely swaying alone might have accounted for the cat's uneasiness. Mr. Wheeler, forced to take that explanation to bed with him, had an uneasy night in its company.

He was so full of the affair the next morning that he made a close examination of the clock, and found it in perfect order. Although he had no watch, he observed that his clock was exactly in time with the tower clock which he could see from his window, and that was as it should have been. After puzzling over the whole problem some time, he decided that he could only go on as formerly, depending upon the future to solve the puzzle.

That day he went about matters as usual. Loss of sleep and the shock to his nerves had been injurious,

Mr. Wheeler examined the doors of his rooms.

but he might retrieve all that. Everything proceeded in the old orderly way until the time came for him to take his ten o'clock nap in the evening. At first he had thought of dispensing with it for a night or two,

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that he might watch for a repetition of the strange occurrences; but after reflecting that it would be unwise to break into the regularity of his habits he decided to take his nap. Accordingly, he composed himself in his chair, saw that Theophilus was sound asleep on the rug, and in a moment, being very tired, he was slumbering.

It seemed to him that he had not been to sleep a minute when the same distressed cry from Theophilus roused him into alarmed wakefulness. Again was Theophilus gazing strangely at the clock. Quickly turning his glance in that direction, Mr. Wheeler saw that the hands again pointed to midnight, and that the little figure was swaying as though it had but just fallen through the trap. This was more than the wretched man's nerves could bear quietly. He trembled, and a perspiration damped his forehead. These things, happening once, made a situation strange enough. A repetition of exactly the same kind—three extraordinary elements entering into it—made a coincidence which was terrible.

Mr. Wheeler found his pulse bounding as before. He examined the clock, and saw that it was in perfect order. He felt that he had not slept two hours, but on a matter of that kind, he knew that no man's judgment is reliable. He replaced the figure and sat for a long time in deep thought and anxiety, at the end of everything he went to bed. His sleep again was uncertain; but, if he had slept for two hours, how could he expect sound slumber? Still, it seemed to him that if he had slept two hours in a cramped position in a chair, he would have felt the strain on his muscles, and yet there was none whatever.

On the third night he threw aside his custom of taking a nap, and decided to watch the cat and clock. At ten o'clock, anxious though he was, the habit of falling asleep came upon him so strongly that he had to resort to various artifices to keep awake. Ten minutes later, he had lost his drowsiness. The cat slumbered quietly on the rug, and the clock and the figure gave no sign of irregular behaviour. Eleven o'clock arrived. He took up his familiar position facing the clock. Slowly he came under the influence of the old spell; his face paled and hardened; he became rigid. In two seconds more the doors would fly open and the execution would occur. A second passed. Then the clock stopped. At the same moment the cat, which had been asleep on the rug, sprang to his feet; the hair arose along his spine, his tail swung to and fro; his eyes, glowing with a strange light, were fixed upon the clock, and he gave a cry of distress and alarm.

It was some time before Mr. Wheeler could get his courage in hand. When he had done so he went to the clock, opened it, found it properly wound up and otherwise apparently in order, and then started it again. The pendulum swung easily, the little doors opened, the execution went forward with the accustomed precision, and the clock attended to its business without any further ado. Mr. Wheeler pushed forward the hands seven minutes, after consulting the illuminated dial of the tower clock, and then sat down, weak and ill, and watched the clock from his chair for the rest of the night. Nothing further went amiss.

In the morning, his hands trembled, his knees were unsteady, his eyes were bloodshot, and his face was haggard and white. Theophilus behaved strangely. This wisest, most complacent, most decorous of cats, exhibited an unusual conduct in divers ways, all ascribable, undoubtedly, to apprehension. Although he no longer paid attention to the clock, he strode about the room stealthily, his tail swinging, his ears erect, and his whole bearing indicating the presence of strange sounds. Mr. Wheeler himself, attentively as he listened, could hear nothing peculiar. Yet the conduct of the cat alarmed him. He strained every sense to catch the least uncommon happening. He examined the walls inch by inch, putting an ear to them now and then, watching Theophilus and the clock meanwhile.

Presently the time arrived for him to take his breakfast; but as he was ill and had no hunger, he fell into a chair and groaned. In a little while the Frenchwoman came in, and started in fright when she saw his face.

"Oh, monsieur!" she exclaimed, "you eel! Ah, what a peety! I bring you some coffee, quick, monsieur."

"If you please, madam," weakly responded the wretched man.

Afterwards he felt a little better; but a violent headache came on, and it seemed as though his temples would burst. He forgot all about his morning walk, and, lying back in his chair, could only watch Theophilus. He had not let any light into the room, and that which managed to get through the blinds, though to him seemingly so brilliant that it burnt him, was insufficient for Jenny, who, a few minutes before her accustomed time, burst into the room in extraordinary excitement.

"I'm sure it was the same," she gasped breathlessly, speaking to herself, and supposing that her master was away; "but I'll see."

Not observing him crouched in his chair, she hastily threw up the blinds, went straight to the clock, and pulled open the little doors. Then she drew the figure from the little trap, with fierce eagerness loosened the noose and removed the black cap, and then, letting the figure fall to the end of its cord, she staggered back to the mantel, clutched her throat, and panted, her wide-staring eyes fixed on the distorted features of the figure.

"Jenny!" called her master.

She screamed and sprang away. Her excitement must have been great for she exhibited neither shame nor contrition for being caught in the act of violating her master's orders. On the contrary, as soon as she could realise that it was he that was present, and not some dreadful thing that evidently she feared, she ran to him and threw herself on her knees at his feet, seizing his hand and clinging to them for protection. Every one of her features and movements expressed terror. Her throat was filled with sobs and gasps. She swayed and writhed in an effort to speak.

"Oh, Mr. Wheeler," she finally found voice to say, "I've seen him—the same as that!" pointing to the figure.

Mr. Wheeler's face became livid, and his eyes seemed to sink back into his skull.

"Where?" he whispered.

"Out there. He was slipping away from your door. His face frightened me so that I ran, and he caught me, and twisted my wrist, and asked me what I was afraid of. He is a young man. I don't know what I said—it was something about a rope around his neck. He said that if I said a word about having seen him, he would kill me. And there was murder in his face!"

Mr. Wheeler shrank deeper into his chair; and there he sat in complete collapse, his jaw hanging, his eyes rolled up and half-closed, and his breathing hardly perceptible. His appearance alarmed the girl, who feared that he had died. She shook him and called him by

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name, but his response was only a faint and petulant groan. She ran and brought the French woman, and together they chaffed his hands, and placed him on a lounge, and covered him heavily, for he was cold. Sooner than might have been expected, and before the arrival of a physician who had been summoned, Mr. Wheeler's face began to brighten, and his pulse and breathing to become strong. He refused to eat anything, and directed the women to leave him alone, taking occasion to whisper to Jenny a request that she should say nothing to anyone about what she had seen.

He got to his feet and looked round anxiously for the cat; Theophilus was sleeping peacefully on his rug. Then he staggered to the clock and carefully readjusted the figure on the trap, taking a great deal of time, for his hands were extremely weak and uncertain. Then he sat down, trembling. The Frenchwoman presently brought him a tempting little meal.

"Thank you," he said. "That is just what I need—I am very hungry."

Threw herself on her knees at his feet.

But as soon as she was gone he gave Theophilus the food to pretend that he himself had eaten. Meanwhile the colour in his cheek had deepened and the light in his eyes became brighter; worse than that, he began to talk, and as Theophilus, to whom he had often talked before, was his sole audience, Theophilus had to listen to him.

"Theophilus," he said, "it is a lie. The girl is mad! Do you understand that? How could he come back, when I myself hounded him to the gallows, when I myself had the last glimpse of his living face when the black cap was drawn over it, when I, myself, after it was all over, saw that same devilishly handsome face all swollen and purple, just as I afterwards reproduced it there, Theophilus?" pointing towards the clock with a meagre, trembling hand. "And yet, Theophilus, she saw something, and that something has come to life and has taken up its abode in my clock, Theophilus."

Theophilus, each time that his name was called, blinkingly opened his eyes and then drowsily closed them again.

"Thirty years ago, Theophilus. Let me say, twenty-nine years, four months, and eleven days. Three hundred and sixty-five times twenty-nine—but where do the leap years come in? Nine times five, forty-five, eight, thirty-two, seven thirty—ten thousand, five hundred and something; hundred and twenty, eleven; ten thousand and—ten thousand and—ten thousand and—more than ten thousand times. Theophilus! He's been hanged by the neck ten thousand and something times, Theophilus! Think of that! Isn't that sufficient to kill a man? What a fool that Jenny is!"

The feeble man rose in his excitement and reeled about the room, his face crimson and his eyes aflame.

"When, thirty years ago, she listened to his smooth voice and lying tongue, and he stole her away from me—oh, Theophilus, had I been born a cat! And in less than a year he was beating her like a dog."

By this time the poor man was reeling wildly about the chamber, stumbling over chairs and tripping over rugs.

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"Beat her like a dog, and I knew nothing of it! Like a dog, Theophilus. Do you understand that? And that wasn't all."

His husky voice fell to a whisper. Half-stooping, half-crouching, he halted in front of the cat, and, with outstretched arm and a finger pointed at the cat, he hissed:

"He murdered her one day—murdered her! And for that, Theophilus," he straightened himself, threw back his head and shoulders, raised both arms triumphantly above his head, and passionately exclaimed in a loud voice: "for that I drove him to the gallows; and I saw him fall through the trap, and I saw his purple face when the cap had been lifted."

He slowly drooped after that outburst, gradually settled into himself, and then sank groaning into his easy-chair, where he sat staring vaguely at the clock.

At eleven o'clock that night, Mr. Wheeler, so weak that he could hardly move, composed himself as usual to watch the execution. Had not his senses become so dull, and had it not happened that Theophilus was without the range of his vision, he certainly would have noticed that strange occurrences were on the march. It is true that about twenty minutes past eleven he heard Theophilus give voice to alarm and distress; but he only laughed foolishly at that, and in a thick, maudlin fashion tried to reassure the animal, knowing nothing of the stealthy entrance of a man through the door.

"That's right, Theoph—Theoph—Theoph—what's your name, Theophilus? What's your name, hey? He's all round here, old fellow, all round here. Can feel him—smell him. You afraid, Theophilus? Don't be afraid, I'm not afraid. Ha! Don't do that, Theoph—Theoph—Theoph—what's your name, Theophilus? What's your name? Six minutes more. Keep an eye on the doors up there. Theoph—Th—Th—ophilus. Gracious me! what a name for a cat! Ha, ha! What a name for a cat! Theos—Theoso—phy. Oh, what a name for a cat! Four minutes more. Keep an eye on the doors up there—doors up there."

And thus he rambled on until the little doors flew open. One more swing of the pendulum, and then the execution. Mr. Wheeler had nerved himself to witness it—to drink in the sweetness of it. His dull eyes and deathly pallid cheeks had taken on new life, and with suppressed respiration he had leaned lurchingly forward, his mouth drooping and his head nodding as with a heavy palsy.

But before the pendulum could swing once more and release the trigger, the dark form of a young man uprose between him and the clock, and shut off his view.

For a little while, Mr. Wheeler could not understand what had happened. The stranger had brought his face directly before Mr. Wheeler's, and the wretched man stared helpless and speechless at the apparition. "Well," said the stranger, his hard voice comporting well with the sinister cruelty on his face; "well, I have brought you to this much sooner than I expected. You are more nervous than I thought. And now, after torturing you thus far, I dare carry it no further, for fear that I shall not leave sufficient life in your miserable body to treat you as my father treated your wife and as you treated him. It is all a delicious revenge. You had forgotten all about me, eh? Perhaps you did not know that she gave birth to me before my father put an end to her. Well, I am his son and your wife's son, and I inherit my father's spirit. Do you understand all that."

The stranger roughly seized him by the shoulders.

It was not clear that Mr. Wheeler did. He still stared in that hopeless way, not knowing that the execution had regularly occurred, or, perhaps, believing that the figure had stepped forth from the clock to punish him. He tried to mumble something. The stranger roughly seized him by the shoulders, and that roused the sinking man. With a tremendous effort, Mr. Wheeler staggered to his feet, pitifully weak. Then in a burst of life, he threw his arms aloft and cried:

"He was a coward and a murderer, and I hanged him nine times five, forty-five, eight, ten thousand——"

* * * * *

The stranger, once again in his own room (which adjoined that of Mr. Wheeler), looked up at the wall.

"I don't think they will ever find that opening behind his clock," he ruminated, as he made final preparations at midnight to leave, "for I have closed it as carefully as possible." He regarded his hands, which appeared to have been badly scratched. "Hang the brute!" he exclaimed. "Who ever heard of a cat fighting for its master's life?" He drew on a pair of gloves and quietly slipped away.

REGINALD BAIRD.

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THE REAR-GUARD.

A Sketch.

A GENERAL in command may order a retreat to secure a stronger line, or because he fears disaster, or for several other reasons which might be termed goodly policy by a court of inquiry, but there is peril in any backward movement. So long as the lines are standing firm, so long will men die bravely. Even if a wing is being beaten back and the fact is unknown in the centre, men will die with their faces to the foe.

An army corps is an anomaly. It will charge into the face of death time and again. Every man will obey like a machine. No man knows what fear is. That is because it is at least holding its ground if not gaining something. Let the order run down the lines for a retrograde movement, and there is a panic observed at once. Have other corps been defeated? Has the enemy pierced the centre? Has the battle been lost? Men ask these questions of each other in cowardly whispers, and within ten minutes four-fifths of the command are ready for flight.

All veterans have experienced this sensation more than once, but no man can explain it. He was there to die. To stay was to be killed. He could fear death only in running away. It wasn't that he was running away to save his life, but from some menace which he could feel and yet not understand. An army of 40,000 men, bravely pushing ahead and feeling victory in the air will leave its dead at every wall and fence and ditch, and on every stone, and cheer and cheer as it pushes on. The same army, if withdrawn for any reason, will be so worked up within half-an-hour that the bursting of a shell will break the formation of a whole brigade.

It is the rear-guard a general looks to with deepest concern when compelled to withdraw in the face of the foe. It is the post of honour for someone seeking death. It is the place of all to try the nerves of the oldest veterans. A victorious army is jubilant and aggressive. A defeated one is nervous and fearful.

The rear-guard steps in between the wolf and its prey. It must retreat, but it must fight as it falls back. There will be dead men, but they will not even be moved aside to escape the wheels. The wounded may be placed in the fence corners or dropped into the ditches, but there will be no time for gentleness.

Here we swing into the main road, up which the last hurrying, straggling company has disappeared. There is a swamp with a long causeway between us and the enemy's advance. Up the road they are trying to save the waggon train. We must give them half-an-hour. First comes the enemy's cavalry. Our two guns are planted to sweep the narrow road, and never a man lives to get within pistol shot. Then he pushes forward a column of infantry. They fill the road and overflow into the swamp, where ooze and water are hip deep. We shell them—we change to grape and canister—we fill the black waters of the swamp with dead men. But there are 5,000 men forming that living, moving wall—a thousand of us.

They push forward from tree to tree, and from bush bush, and we are driven back. It is either retreat or annihilation. We leave our dead and wounded and fall back. The enemy cheers again as he advances, and we turn and fire and push on again. Here are wounded men sitting by the roadside or lying at full length on the grass. Some rise up and hobble painfully after us; others beg for water and fall to weeping. We cannot be burdened. We cannot even be merciful. We are the rear-guard—not here to save a hundred but thousands.

At the foot of the hill are two broken waggons, an ambulance with a wheel off, a heap of knapsacks and muskets thrown away by weary and fearful men; half-way up the hill more abandoned waggons and two or three dying horses; at its crest a caisson and more spoils for the enemy.

"Halt! Here we check them again!"

The guns are planted and the infantry positioned, and we can see that the highway clear back to the swamp is a mass of moving men. Thirty to one, perhaps, but we must fight. It is only when they overflow into the forest and field and are on our flanks that the guns are limbered up and we fall back. We have given them another heap of dead to bury, more wounded to care for; but, alas! we dare not stop to count our own loss.

Across a plain for half a mile, past a farmhouse and its barns and orchard, and the highway turns to the left and enters the forest. We halt at the turn. There is just time to draw a long breath when the head of the wild beast, scenting our bloody footprints, comes into view. Our shells scream down the dusty highway and mingle blood with dust. They rend, they tear, they maim and kill, but the living wall is not checked. Then grape and canister whirr and whistle and scream, and the muskets of our infantry blaze and crackle, but we cannot stem the tide. Even as we are ready to fall back, one of our guns is dismounted, and we must help the horses to draw away the other. There are more dead and wounded—only a skeleton command to stagger back and look for another position.

Here the highway leaves the woods and ascends a strong hill. The afternoon has waned, and the sun is disappearing. Half-way up the hill the last horse falls in his tracks, and we drag the gun and its caisson up by hand. It is our last stand. The army is safe and can ask no more of us. As we bind up each other's hurts, we can hear the foe cheering down the road. Five minutes later the last shell is fired. There is no more grape, no more canister. Gun and caisson are overturned into the ditch.

We hold the hill for ten minutes with a fire of musketry which leaps up against the evening sky like a great bonfire, and there comes a sudden silence. We have the order to retreat. Leaving the wounded to groan and pray, leaving the dead to grow cold as the red sunset fades away and the stars come out, we glide away like shadows into the night, and like shadows are swallowed up and lost to view.

We were fighting for night to come. It is here. The pursuit is ended.

RICHARD SIBERT.

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IGNATIUS BINKS, TRAGEDIAN.

HE was a familiar figure at the Thespis Club, was Ignatius Binks—and a very impressive figure, too, in his own estimation. When you saw his card (and he always handed them out with a lordly air, from a dilapidated case) you would readily surmise the character of the man, even had you never seen him before in the course of your life.

There was something so absurdly comical in the combination of Ignatius and Binks, when the two names belonged to one individual, that you felt an irresistible inclination to smile the moment your eyes rested on them. Poor Ignatius! He was, if you credited *his* story, an unrecognised genius. If, on the other hand, you felt disposed to believe the statements of those whom he deemed worthy his notice—a waggish set—he was a "crushed tragedian," and had endured all the sneers and heartaches which that questionable term implies.

He had studied every character in Shakespeare, from the waiting lady in *Macbeth* to Hamlet, and of each character he had his own original conception. These conceptions, it may be said, were decidedly novel. Fortunately for the public, Ignatius never had an opportunity to air them on the stage.

One day he came home—his countenance betraying mingled sorrow, disgust and anger—flung himself into a chair, dropped his head into his hand, and looked pensive. Mrs. Binks, a bustling, common-sense little woman, who had formerly played minor parts in various companies, glanced at her liege lord and sighed. It might be mentioned, in passing, that Ignatius's passiveness and the sigh of his wife, were matters of daily occurrence in the Binks household. To-day, however, Ignatius appeared even more depressed than usual, and his wife said sympathetically: "Some new trouble?"

"Yes," he murmured wearily, "and each new trouble is an insult."

"What has happened?" the little woman asked.

"Happened!" thundered Ignatius furiously, rising from the chair after the method of a stage king. "This is what has happened! To-day I met Bagsby of the Gaiety, and he offered me a part in a new piece—a part of thirty lines—think of it, and in a farce-comedy. Thirty lines in an odious concoction which will be an outrage on an intelligent public! And I—well, fortunately my wrath did not appear on the surface—you know, Clara, my love, I am a believer in repressed emotion, and it was simply a merciful Providence which prevented me from strangling the presumptuous ignoramus on the spot."

Ignatius took six Hamlet strides across the apartment and would undoubtedly have taken more had not the space been unpleasantly limited. Then he turned suddenly, folded his arms, and with downcast head, murmured:

"That it should come to this! But"—with gaunt arm pointing towards the ceiling—"behind the clouds the sun waits to burst into splendour. Even so do *I* wait. Rest, quiet, my ambitious soul; your day will come—it *must!*"

Ignatius took six strides more which brought him to a dilapidated sofa, and thereon he threw himself in deep dejection.

"Binks, darling," said his practical better-half, "what salary did Bagsby offer you?"

"The beggarly pittance of one pound a week," groaned the disciple of Shakespeare, adding: "merciful heavens! how my soul cried out in direst agony at the insult!"

"What was your answer?" continued Mrs. Binks.

"Answer!" yelled Ignatius, again rising and assuming the attitude of a man about to quell a howling mob. "I spoke not to him in words. I merely *looked* at him—aye, gave him one searching glance, and then strode forth into the world, to forget my woes amid its bustling activity."

"Well, you did a very foolish thing," was the comment of Mrs. Binks.

"What would you?" responded Ignatius tragically. "Think you, I would have so degraded——"

"Listen, Binks," interrupted his wife. "One pound weekly will be a great blessing to us. Don't look at it so slightingly. Accept Bagsby's offer."

"But, Clara, my love," groaned her spouse pathetically, "think of it—a farce-comedy. Dost fancy I can bring my soaring soul to grapple with such rot?"

"You must, my dear," decided Mrs. Binks. "As I said before, accept Bagsby's offer, and wait patiently for the triumph which, I trust, the future will bring."

"But my soul, my artistic soul, rebels," moaned Ignatius.

"Let it rebel," answered his wife, "and conquer it. That will be a victory for you. Recollect, Binks, dear, that we are almost penniless, that we scarcely know where the next meal is coming from. Do you want your wife and child to go hungry?"

"Ah, Clara, good angel of my life," cried the crushed actor, throwing himself on his knees at Mrs. Binks' side, "you have suffered much for my sake. It shall be so no longer. You have asked me to make a sacrifice. I will make it. For the sake of you and our helpless little one, I will silence my proud soul, I will away at

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once to that infamous Bagsby. Let me not tarry a moment, lest my courage forsake me."

Ignatius seized his battered umbrella, straightened himself as if for a mighty effort, pointed theatrically towards an imaginary spirit, and muttered solemnly:

"Lead on, oh cruel fate. I follow thee!"

Then he was gone. He did not, however, go to Bagsby's. On the contrary, he went to a neighbouring public-house, took a seat in a secluded corner, ordered an inexpensive beverage, and as he drank it, much as a stage villain quaffs imaginary wine from a gilded wooden goblet, he gave himself up to reflection.

As an outcome of his meditations, he drew from an inner pocket a small roll of manuscript, and surveyed it disdainfully. It was the "thirty-line part" in the new piece. How came it in his possession? In this wise. He had really told Bagsby that he "would consider the matter," and he had taken the part to look it over. It will, therefore, be seen that he had not adhered strictly to truth in the conversation with his wife.

Ignatius's soul *had* revolted at Bagsby's offer, but he had acted wisely, nevertheless, foreseeing what the result would be if his wife discovered that he had declined an opportunity to earn a pound per week. Still, he could not lower himself to the level of farce-comedy without a strong protest. Hence the scene with Mrs. Binks.

Ignatius having finished his beverage and his meditations, returned the manuscript to his pocket, threw down a very small coin, with a magnificent air, and again sought the Binks hearthstone, vouchsafing to his wife only these words, which were spoken as if wrung from a tortured soul:

"Bagsby has had his hour of triumph. The part is in my pocket. Henceforth let me hide myself from those who have known me."

The first night of the new piece came, and Ignatius did all in his power to so disguise himself that his friends, if any were in the audience, should not recognise him. The mental torture which he endured while on the stage for his one brief scene is indescribable. He played a serious *rôle*, and yet the spectators persisted in laughing at his every word and move. It was wormwood, gall—the bitterest of gall—and when his duties for the evening were over he strode homeward with a countenance which, to one unfamiliar with his character, was indicative of murder.

"Clara, my love," he cried wildly, bursting in upon his wife, "hide me—hide me from my fellow creatures. Let the world not look upon me again. Oh, the agony, the humiliation I have endured this night. I was laughed at—actually laughed at, my loved one, by the audience. Aye, Ignatius Binks was laughed at! Oh, heaven! let me not think on't or I shall go mad!"

He took six strides forward, six back, flung his arms about wildly and threw himself upon the sofa.

"My love," said his wife joyfully, "I see it all. You have hitherto mistaken your line of business. You are a comedian."

Ignatius rose to his feet like magic, his eyes blazed, and his face wore a marvellous expression of contempt.

"A comedian!" he yelled in tones of awful disgust, "I might have expected such an insult from Bagsby, but scarcely from the lips of one who should have consoled me in the hour of my mortification. Madam, good-night!"

The next morning Mrs. Binks bought a penny paper, and looked over the criticism of the new piece. Alas! it was voted a failure, but her eyes danced as she read it. Ignatius had made a hit. The leading part, that of an erratic and impoverished author, referred to as a *rôle* of the strongest possibilities for an eccentric comedian, had fallen flat owing to the incompetency of the actor who had attempted to portray it. The criticism went on to say that with a proper representation of the principal *rôle* the comedy would undoubtedly prove highly successful. Mrs. Binks sighed. The piece was probably a failure, and in a couple of weeks Ignatius would again be out of an engagement.

A cry from the baby in the cradle caused her to drop the paper. She took the little one in her arms, and as she did so it moaned piteously. It had been ailing for some days, but had not seemed seriously ill until this moment. Mrs. Binks grew suddenly frightened at the pale face nestling against her bosom. She knew what was wrong. The child was suffering from lack of proper nourishment, lack of fresh air, lack of almost everything that such a tender life needed. The mother was powerless to remedy the ailments of her little one, and hot tears came into her eyes at the thought of her helplessness. A quick rattle of cab-wheels, stopping below her window, broke in upon her grief. Then there were hurried steps upon the stair, followed by an impatient knock at the door. She laid the child gently in its cradle and admitted the visitors. Great was her amazement to discover in them Mr. Bagsby and the author of the new play.

"Is this Mrs. Binks?" asked the manager blandly.

"Yes," returned the astonished woman.

"Where is your husband?" was the next question. "We must see him at once. He has made the hit in the new play, and I am prepared to make him a splendid offer. Our leading comedian has proved a fizzle, and to save the piece from failure, we must replace him at once. Mr. Binks is the only man for the *rôle*. Last night he proved himself an eccentric comedian of marvellous ability and we want him to study the principal character immediately, so as to appear in it to night. This is the opportunity of his life. Where is he?"

"I will send him to you," replied Mrs. Binks, talking as if in a dream.

She went to her husband, lifting the sick child in her arms before she left the apartment. Ignatius sat alone in a little room which he called his study, his face expressive of grave concern. His wife submitted Bagsby's proposition to him. He rose to his feet at its conclusion, drew himself up to his full height, and was about to plunge into a violent speech, when Mrs. Binks went to his side, and said gently:

"My dear, look at the baby's face. Our darling is dying for need of many things which only money can procure. Are you going to jeopardise her life by throwing aside this golden opportunity? Sacrifice yourself for the baby's sake."

Ignatius looked at his child's face, then he kissed the pale little cheeks, while tears stood in his eyes. He saw all the dreams of his life going from him. Hamlet, Macbeth, Julius Cæsar and a dozen other immortal creations seemed wailing a last farewell to him, and in their stead he saw only a farce-comedy hero. The baby's face conquered, but it was pathetic after all. The death of an ideal is always so.

* * * * *

Ignatius saved the new piece. To-day he is well known as a delightful comic actor, and his bank account has assumed pleasurable proportions. He always feels, though, that he is in the wrong groove, and that cruel necessity deprived the stage of a brilliant tragedian.

HORACE LEFTWICH.

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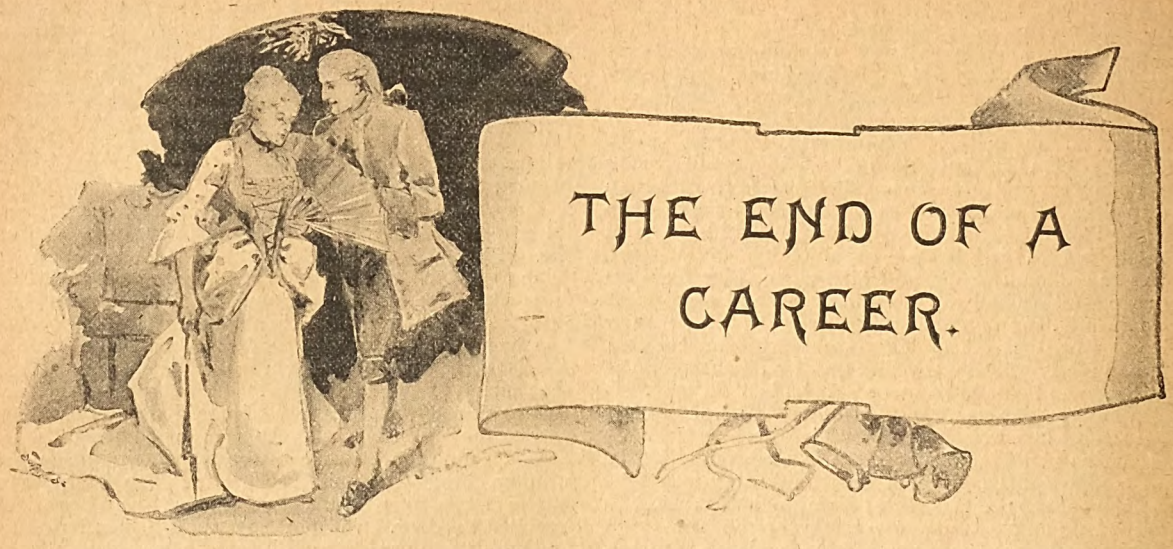

THE END OF A CAREER.

A man was sitting at his writing-table in some chambers at Pump Court, Temple, where he occupied two squalid rooms in the attics of one of the oldest and most dismal houses of that blighted quadrangle. The room was low and ill-lighted, and a great whitewashed beam, festooned with cobwebs, crossed the dirty ceiling from one end to the other. It was barely furnished, though the walls were covered with well-filled bookshelves, containing not merely standard works on law, but also a large number on philosophy and other miscellaneous subjects. There was as well, a fair proportion of the poets, and classical writers, both of dead and living languages. The carpet was faded and worn, while the curtains, rent and discoloured, hung limply over the streaky windows, which looked on to the gloomy houses on the opposite side of the court.

The man was leaning over the table with his head in his hands as though in pain. The photograph of a woman in a costly frame was before him, and also a pile of letters in a delicate feminine hand, which he had evidently been reading.

On the sideboard was lying, by an open case, a rusty gun, and two cartridges were on the hearth, as though put there to dry.

Presently he rose languidly from his seat, and, picking up the bundle of papers, went over to the fire and put them on the mantelpiece. Taking the letters one by one, he carefully read each through, and then thrust it into the grate. With some he did this hastily, as though anxious for their destruction; with others, and one especially, with lingering reluctance. As they were slowly consuming, his face grew paler and more careworn, and his features were drawn and contorted as though with some painful emotion. When all were burned he went back to the table, took up the photograph, and, going to the window, gazed at it long and earnestly. As he did so, his dim eyes filled with tears, and the great salt drops rolled down thick and fast; some fell upon the beautiful face of the portrait, blurring and disfiguring it out of all recognition.

At last, with a deep sigh, he raised it gently and reverently to his lips, and, again approaching the fire, put it hurriedly between the bars, as if he were afraid his resolution might relax, unless he acted without time for reflection. He watched it with hands clasped, and lips tightly pressed, as it first smouldered and shrivelled, and then burst into flame.

The fire soon dried the tear stains, and as it slowly sank into the glowing embers and the flames reached the face, the eyes of the photograph seemed, to his fevered fancy, to shine through the mist once more with almost living brightness, and its contraction, as it curled and shrunk under the influence of the heat, gave to the lips a wierd motion as though they were about to speak. With a half cry he tried to withdraw it, but it was too late; and in another instant it fell with a dying flicker into a hollow of the fire, and nothing but a piece of charred and blackened paper remained. He covered his face with his hands for a moment as he leant upon the mantelpiece, and then returning to his desk, took a pen and a sheet of paper and wrote as follows:

"When you get this, the last letter I shall ever write, I shall have taken that great leap into the dark, and solved those secrets of another world, on which we have so often speculated.

"During the last month—ever since my wife's death, in fact—I have felt the certainty of this day being close at hand, growing upon me with irresistible force, and I know now that the hour of my deliverance has come. It will hurt no one. I am quite alone. No tear will be shed on my dishonoured coffin: no mourner will follow it to the grave; and no stone mark my final resting-place.

"I did not realise at first that you intended to give me up so completely. You said we should be friends always, and that, if separated by necessity, you would write to me and give me comfort. But I fancy women do not regard a promise as so sacred that to break it is dishonourable. So, you see, it is the wisest thing I could do, as I can bear my desolation no longer. It is folly to struggle against the dictation of a natural impulse, which must be the surest guide in all matters beyond the ken of human reason. I have no more to say, only good-bye and may God for ever bless you! Remember the last words of a doomed man. In the hour of death, as in life, I love you, and if the soul is imperishable, so will my love also be eternal!"

He put the letter in an envelope, stamped and

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directed it in the careless, slovenly hand which was characteristic of the man. He then looked at his watch and, putting on his hat, went downstairs and out into the court, through the mouldering old archway, across the lane to the pillar-box opposite, into which, after looking again at the direction, he dropped his letter.

It was a raw February day, and he shivered as though the cold pierced him to the marrow.

An old beggar woman came shuffling down the lane in quest of some one careless or humane enough to purchase a half-filled box of damp matches. As he stood, looking up at the lowering sky, he at first paid no attention to her whining appeal. Then suddenly he seemed to notice her, and, struck more with her destitution than her deserts, put his hand in his pocket and drew out everything it contained. He did not count it, or even look to see what it was, but gave the whole handful of mixed coins to the bewildered mendicant.

He went slowly back to his dreary chambers, and as he entered them the clock at the Law Courts struck the hour of four. He sat down at his writing-table and emptied all its drawers of papers, glancing carelessly at some, but consigning most of them to the fire.

His eye fell on an old briar pipe on the mantelpiece, which he took up and regarded fondly, as though it were an old friend. Pulling a tobacco pouch from his pocket, which contained, however, only a little dust in the corners, he scraped what there was together, and, filling his pipe, lit it, and sat down in the old armchair to ponder dreamily for a few minutes, with his feet upon the fender.

Above the incessant roar of the two contending currents of street traffic, the discordant cries of the newsboys in the Strand were quite audible, though it was impossible to distinguish what exciting headline they were shouting. The smoker, after listening for moment, went to the window, and, opening it, learnt that the episode in the evening papers was the death of an eminent barrister in court. He smiled grimly to himself. "I wonder who it is?" he said. "I've half a mind to go out and get a paper just to see."

He felt in his pocket as though to extract the necessary copper, but, finding nothing, laughed and went on:

"That settles it at any rate. Well, well, he chose a better place and company to die in than I have; I wonder whose court it was in?"

He shut the window with a bang, and, after knocking out the ashes of his pipe, looked for the first time at the gun on the sideboard. It was a handsome breech-loader, though in a somewhat neglected state, as if it had not been used for some time. He took it up and put it to his shoulder two or three times as though aiming at some imaginary bird and exclaimed:

"How well it comes up. I don't believe there is a better-balanced gun anywhere, and it has done me some good service in its day, but never so good as on the last time I shall ever use it."

He slipped in the cartridges, and snapped the breech to, as calmly as he had ever done in field or covert. Then he stirred the fire into a cheerful blaze and sat down in the armchair again, with the gun across his knees. His hands played idly with the hammers, while he stared in a ruminating, dazed way at the leaping flames.

He looked at his watch. It was five minutes to five. Still he did nothing but glance from time to time round the room, as it was fitfully illuminated by the flickering firelight. There was a heavy mist outside, and it was already almost dark.

Presently the great clock in the Strand boomed out the first of the four quarters. He started slightly. His face was ashen white, but quite calm, although on his forehead there gathered a few drops of glistening moisture, as he pushed back the hair from his eyes. As the clock sounded the first stroke of the hour he turned the gun round with the muzzle close against his mouth. Then he waited, with his head thrown back and his feet carelessly crossed. His hand was quite steady and the gun never shook.

As the slow and solemn tones of the hour-bell tolled the knell of his unhappy union with the world, the time between each stroke seemed interminable. On the fourth his breath grew deeper and more hurried as he fixed himself with greater rigidity in the chair.

On the first vibration of the last stroke its full sound is lost in a loud report.

* * * * *

At about eight, footsteps are heard running upstairs. The outer door being shut, a paper is thrust into the letter-box, and the patter of feet again sounds on the stairs, gradually dying away in the dark and deserted court.

The next morning the door of the room was broken open.

The man's name was known, but there were no papers whatever to confirm his identity or throw any light upon his history. No motive for the deed was discovered.

An unopened telegram lying on the floor, passed into the hands of his landlady. It contained these words:

"You will have heard that my husband died this morning of heart disease in the Court of Appeal. Much upset. Will write soon."

There was no signature, and the landlady, who attached no importance to the words, consigned it to the fire.

That same day a woman was sitting alone glancing through the evening paper. She scanned through the mystery in the City, until she came to the name of the suicide.

Long afterwards she was found in a dead faint on the floor.

R. B.

A NEW SERIAL COMMENCES IN "SHORT STORIES"

dated May 23rd, and published on Tuesday, May 19th. It is called

"The Wythecombe Mystery,"

And is from the pen of Mr. JOHN K. LEYS, whose work is already known to readers of SHORT STORIES as the author of "The Tenth of June," and other tales.

THE STORY WILL BE ILLUSTRATED BY MR ST. MAR FITZGERALD.

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THE GHOST AT THE PRIORY

CHAPTER I.

SIR SIMON WYNYARD.

IT was a wild winter's night. The strong westerly wind drove the heavy rain in gusts against the windows of the old Priory. The trees bent and swayed in the gale, their few remaining leaves torn off, flying and whirling through the air. In the old gardens the late marigolds and straggling mignonette gave up the contest in despair, and were beaten hopelessly; the chrysanthemums held down their dripping heads; even the purple pansies in the sheltered corner by the south wall had much ado to keep themselves from being broken into the wet earth by the heavy drops.

Even as the wind lulled, for a fresh outburst, the ear was aware of another sound above the roar of the storm—a steady, pulsing, unvarying rush—the husky voice of the mill-wheel as it strove at its task of grinding the wheat.

For how many generations had the mill-wheel worked? It had ground the bread of monks who once dwelt at the Priory. had seen those monks scattered abroad by Henry the Eighth, and the Wynyard family take their place. It had been turning the great mill-stones, and groaning at its task like a chained giant, when a horseman galloped along the road, and drawing rein on the opposite bank, shouted across to the miller the news of the sighting of the Armada. Still it strove, and worked, and sang when the Cavalier owner of the Priory fell at his own gate, struck down by a Puritan bullet; and later, when his Jacobite grandson lay hidden among the sacks in the mill while the soldiers searched the Priory for him in vain.

And, as the mill-wheel turned and turned through the years that followed, the broad lands beside the river passed into other hands, leaving but little for the descendants of Cavalier and Jacobite. Yet mill and Priory faced each other like faithful friends through all the changes, and the husky song of the turning wheel was the most familiar sound of life in every Wynyard's ears.

To-night the wheel toiled steadily through the storm, and in the darkness the pale pillar of white spray glimmered fitfully, and the fierce rain lashed the clots of foam floating away on the black water.

There were lights in the mill, and the fantastic shadows of the miller and his men wavered and flickered on walls and ceiling. There were also other lights gleaming here and there in the stormy darkness, and others still gleaming from the Priory windows, answering as it were the friendly beams from the mill. Further on were two cottages, then a small house, where the parish clerk lived, then the rectory, and the little church; these few dwellings made up the village of Lulham.

"It's a wild night!" said the miller, as a fresh gust swept past the mill, and drowned for a moment the groaning of the wheel; and that same thought must have fled over the river on the wet wings of the wind into the Priory drawing-room, where Mrs. Wynyard, the widow of the last owner, sat with her two daughters, for, as the gust tore through the garden, and shrieked against the panes, she sighed, and said, gently:

"It is a wild night!"

And Bridget, the younger, looked up from a book, adding, with laughing eyes:

"A night for Sir Simon to walk!"

"Don't, Bridget!" said her sister; "you make me feel quite creepy. I wish you would not speak of him."

"Don't you like feeling creepy? It is the only excitement we have in this place. What would Lulham be without Sir Simon? I'm proud to think that he was our ancestor—dear, wicked old thing! Now, Cynthia, confess that you, too, are proud of Sir Simon."

"No, I don't think I am. He was quite horrid!"

"Certainly, he shows a odd taste in preferring to walk abroad on stormy nights." This from Mrs. Wynyard.

"Oh, mother, wild weather is so much more picturesque and suitable for him," cried Bridget. "A ghost of Sir Simon's calibre needs a stormy night for his rambles. Moonlight ghosts belong to love tragedies."

Cynthia laughed.

"Bridget is learned in ghost lore."

The two sisters were much alike. Both, fair, blue-eyed, with a clear, fresh, wild-rose bloom. Cynthia's hair however, was a silken yellow, like coiled sunshine; Bridget's, a soft nut-brown. Both girls were lissom, willowy, altogether charmingly attractive, and their mother regarded them with pride and regret, for who would ever see their beauty while they remained in Lulham? and, alas! they were too poor to leave it.

Bridget held up her finger.

"Listen! I can hear the mill-wheel now. The wind has lulled for a moment. Will the spell hold Sir Simon under the wheel? Or has he escaped, and set off on his travels? Perhaps he is walking about the garden—his garden? Suppose he takes a fancy to call upon us—his descendants! Suppose ——"

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Here there came a sudden, thundering knock at the hall door, and Bridget—valiant, ghost-loving Bridget—thus interrupted, gave a loud scream.

"I wasn't frightened," she protested, recovering herself, and laughing, "only startled. That knock arrived just at the right minute. Who can it be?"

"It cannot be the carrier," suggested Mrs. Wynyard, doubtfully. "We have not ordered anything."

"I hope Jane will not open the door without putting the chain on," said Cynthia nervously, hearing the maid's footsteps in the hall.

Bridget sprang up.

"Why, Cynthia, you are quite pale! I'll see who our visitor is."

She looked back as she ran out of the room, adding:

"If it is Sir Simon, nothing will keep him out but a strong form of exorcism. Isn't there one in 'Ingoldsby'? Better get the book ready, Cynthia!"

The hall was wide, lofty, and full of shadows, being lighted only by a small lamp on a carved bracket. As Bridget's high heels click-clacked over the flags, the maid opened the heavy front-door; a strong gust blew in, and the lamp-chimney cracked and fell, extinguishing the light.

"Fetch another lamp, Jane, quick!" said Bridget, hastening to the door.

"It's a man, miss," replied the maid, in a stage whisper. "But he can't get in, whoever he is, for the chain's on."

"Really, I'm quite harmless," said a laughing masculine voice outside—a pleasant voice. "My name is Medlycott—George Medlycott. I am an Australian. My mother is an old friend of Mrs. Wynyard's, and wished me to call at the Priory when I passed through Lulham."

"I know your name very well. Mother will be delighted to see you," said Bridget, reassured by the voice, and trying to peer through the darkness. But the rain beat in upon her hair and face, and she could only see the dim outlines of a tall, muffled figure. "You must excuse your reception. We could not imagine anyone coming to see us on such a night."

Here Jane reappeared with another light, and the stranger, being admitted, glanced round with an air of pleased curiosity.

He was a tall, dark, young fellow, with bright eyes and a frank manner.

"I have heard so much of this old place," he said, apologetically, "I have often wished to see it. And you are Cynthia—or Bridget?"

"I am Bridget," leading him into the drawing-room. "Mother—Cynthia—this is Mr. Medlycott, from Australia."

Mrs. Wynyard's face brightened as she welcomed the young man. He was the son of her oldest friend and schoolfellow, and his presence carried her back to her girlhood's days, before sorrow and poverty had dimmed the brightness of her life.

"You are very like my old friend, your dear mother," she said. "I should have known you from the photograph she sent me of you."

"That is fortunate," he replied, smiling, "for, otherwise, you might think me an impostor. But I have brought credentials," pulling some letters out of his pocket.

"We took you for a ghost," said Cynthia, "the ghost of Sir Simon, who strolls about on stormy nights."

"Does he?" George Medlycott evidently took as much interest in ghosts as Bridget herself. "What for? I mean, what is his particular woe or crime?"

"Bridget will tell you; she is the family ghost-lover. I must see about supper. I am sure you want something to eat."

She slipped softly out of the room—Cynthia always seemed to glide about the house as noiselessly as a fairy—and the Australian's eyes followed her regretfully.

It was a quaint, oblong room into which Medlycott followed his hostess shortly afterwards; a cosy room,

There came a sudden, thundering knock at the hall door.

the firelight shining on deep-red hangings and many bookshelves, and gleaming on Cynthia's yellow hair as she stood by the table, lighting the crimson-shaded lamp.

"This is surely a part of the old Priory?" George remarked, looking up at the groined ceiling.

Cynthia turned her smiling blue eyes upon him.

"Yes, you are right. Tradition says that this was the Prior's parlour. The walls are so thick that you can scarcely hear the storm."

"The house grows more interesting every minute," and Medlycott surveyed the ceiling again as he sat down. "I don't know how I shall wait till to-morrow to begin exploring. Please put me in the haunted chamber, if there is one."

"There is no haunted room; but the cellars under the new part of the house have an uncanny reputation. The floors are paved, and the walls partially built with old tombstones—a kind of sacrilege, you see. And there is always a wind blowing there, however still the day may be. People say it is only draughts. It makes a curious sort of wailing chant, which a legend says is the monks singing masses for the souls of the dead."

"I shall enjoy hearing them. Are any of the inscriptions on the tombstones legible?"

"I don't know," Cynthia confessed, with a little, soft laugh, and a faint increase of colour. "You will think me very silly, but that chanting makes me feel so creepy that I have never stopped in the cellars a minute longer than I could help. Bridget has, though."

George laughed, a kindly, amused laugh, and said to himself that Cynthia's face was the loveliest he had ever seen with those summer-blue eyes, and that changing, wild-rose colour.

"Many of the inscriptions are quite clear, and very

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interesting," said Bridget, in answer to his glance of inquiry. "I've read heaps of them over and over again. I'll take you down there first thing to-morrow morning."

Cynthia.

"If this wind continues I should think the monk's chant will be a positive howl."

"Oh, no, the sound never varies in the least. It is always the same."

"Is it?"

Medlycott looked puzzled, and Bridget triumphant.

"Ah," she said, "you will soon be as scared as Cynthia. I am a most splendid ghost-cicerone. I will make your hair stand on end."

That was a merrier meal than had been eaten for a long, long time in the old Priory. Even poor Mrs. Wynyard, depressed by loneliness and poverty, felt her spirits grow lighter under the cheering influence of the Australian's presence. He seemed so buoyant, so happy, so thoroughly interested in them and their belongings.

Few people took any interest in the Wynyards. Cynthia's soft loveliness, and Bridget's brilliant beauty were weighty reasons why their parents' old friends should conveniently forget them. Handsome and portionless girls are apt to attract sons, and spoil daughters' chances.

Mr. Wynyard had died when his children were mere babies, died partly from anxiety caused by heavy money losses; and the girls had grown up in this secluded village, seeing no one. No wonder that this friendly stranger cheered the quiet household.

When they retired to the drawing-room, Bridget undertook to relate the legend of the family ghost.

"The wind is not quite so high," she cried, drawing back the heavy curtains from before the window. "You can hear the mill-wheel now."

And the steady, pulsing sound came clearly to Medlycott's ears through the hiss of the rain.

Bridget dropped the curtain, and drew a low chair close up to the fire.

"In the days of the Stuarts," she began, stretching out one small hand with a dramatic gesture—"lived our ancestor, Sir Simon Wynyard. He was a mean and cruel man. Rather than pay the new poor-rates, he pulled down all the cottages in Lulham save two, turning out the villagers in the depth of winter to find homes wherever they could. A great snowstorm came on, and many lost their way, and were frozen to death. But Sir Simon cared nothing, and the years went on. At last he died, I think, of some kind of ague, for in his illness he was constantly shivering. Nothing would keep him warm. Of course, people said that the cold of the frozen villagers had seized him—it was Heaven's vengeance. At the last moment he repented, and sent for a priest; but, as the holy father crossed the threshold, Sir Simon died—unshriven. Therefore, his spirit could not rest. When mass was said for his soul in the Priory chapel, on the eve of his burial, a great wind swept through the chapel, and extinguished the candles; and, that same night, Sir Simon was seen in the village, wringing his hands with loud cries of despair. After that, he constantly walked over the sites of the cottages he had pulled down, stopping at each one and lamenting. Then the Lulham people called upon the Protestant vicar to lay the ghost. It was intolerable that the slumbers of good Christians should be disturbed by the vain lamentations of a wicked spirit. The vicar consulted the bishop, who came to Lulham with a goodly following of clergy, and armed with the strongest possible form of exorcism. He solemnly laid the spirit of Sir Simon under the mill-wheel, granting him permission to walk about only on stormy nights, when his cries would be unheard in the roar of the wind."

Bridget stopped, and, in the momentary silence, the dull, even beat of the mill-wheel throbbed steadily through the whistling of the gale.

"Couldn't they consign the poor chap to Purgatory?" suggested Medlycott. "I should think that would have almost have been a more cheerful place of sojourn."

"They could not send him anywhere out of this world—there was the difficulty," replied Bridget, solemnly. "Of course, Sir Simon is abroad to-night. I was just telling Cynthia that, perhaps he would call upon us, when you knocked."

"And Bridget screamed," added Cynthia softly.

"Yes, I did," Bridget admitted; "but only because the knock startled me. It came so opportunely."

"I am sorry I attacked the knocker with such unnecessary vigour," laughed George. "I thought if it

"In the days of the Stuarts," she began.

didn't make a noise, you would never hear me in the storm."

They talked on till late, Mrs. Wynyard wishing to hear all news of her old friend, and the girls listening to the young man's glowing description of the Australian bush in Leichart's Land.

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CHAPTER II.

SIR JOCELYN'S TOMB.

THE next morning was clear and sunny, a golden November day. The river ran swollen between its banks, the mill-wheel churned heavily the turbulent volume of water that dashed through it, and foamed away to rejoin the river. In the Priory garden the chrysanthemums were trying to lift their rain-laden heads, and a robin sang on a leafless bough, as though the time were spring.

Before lunch, George Medlycott went round the village with Cynthia and Bridget, and into the old church, where many Wynyards lay side by side. The monuments fascinated the Australian, and, with the girls' assistance, he spelt out most of the nearly obliterated inscriptions on the tombs and brasses.

"We must come here again," he said, looking back as they passed out of the west door. "I have not half seen the place yet. Now for the mill-wheel. Whereabouts is Sir Simon deposited?"

"Just under the wheel," Cynthia pointed to the whirl of foaming water that rushed upward from beneath the churning wheel. "The bishop and clergy stood where we are standing now, and the wheel was stopped till the concluding words of the service, then it was turned on again."

"I should think the poor old boy must be thankful for a stormy night, when he can get out and take a walk. How mossy those stones are!"

Medlycott spoke of the sandstone blocks that held back the bank on either side of the wheel. They were of irregular shapes, and here and there tiny ferns, withered now, nestled in the crevices, and tufts of long, fine grass hung down, trailing in the swift rushing waters.

There was a cheerful stir about the mill. Fowls were pecking about; the miller, dusty with flour, came out for a moment, took off his hat to the Wynyards, looked curiously at the stranger, and went in again. Then the dog strolled out, barked and wagged his tail; the bark was for Medlycott, the tail wagging for his companions.

"The history of the mill is all mixed up with the history of the Priory," said Bridget. "I will tell you about it this evening after you have seen the house."

"And the cellars where the monks chant?" said George. "You see, I have not forgotten those cellars. I am expecting to make all sorts of discoveries there. I shall find out the cause of the chanting."

"No," Bridget shook her head emphatically, "you will not discover that."

"Bridget would be quite sorry if you did," laughed Cynthia.

November days, however fair, are short; therefore, lunch was no sooner over than Medlycott was taken by winding passages and down crooked flights of worn stone steps into the Priory cellars, Bridget leading the way, her sister and their visitor following.

"You will come, too?" George had asked. "I really am an efficient protector against a league of phantom monks."

And Cynthia had smilingly assented, saying she wished to observe the effect of the chanting on a stranger; though whether a less pleasant stranger than the Australian would have induced her to descend into those ghastly precincts is a matter of doubt.

They went down the last and most crooked of the steps, through an archway, into a wide, stone-flagged and stone-walled chamber.

Then Bridget stopped, and said:

"Hush!"

The sound that fell upon their ears, might have been mistaken for distant chanting. It might be described as a low, monotonous wail, rising and falling, yet not falling below a certain level of tone. It filled the chamber, and was heard equally from every part of it, yet it seemed to be far away.

They passed through another arched doorway into a chamber similar to the first, but rather smaller. Here, as in the other, the monotonous wail filled the air with its unceasing lament, just so loud, and no louder—just as far away.

"It is very singular," said George, looking around him with a puzzled expression. "I am not surprised at the belief in the monkish chanting. It is like the singing of many voices in unison."

"As when one stands outside a church, and hears the murmur of voices within." This from Cynthia.

"Yes, that is it. As the sound is the same in both cellars, I think it must be caused by a current of air passing exactly between them, either below the floor or above the ceiling."

"I suppose it must be something of that sort," said Cynthia as she glanced upward to the top of the archway; "but you cannot pull down the house to look!"

Bridget stopped, and said, "Hush!"

"And probably if I did, the act of pulling down would destroy the conditions necessary for the working of this mysterious Æolian harp, still, I do not acknowledge myself beaten. I may yet discover the cause."

"I am determined to believe in the monks," said Bridget gravely. "Now, look at the pavement and the walls. Here are whole histories for you."

She was right. Walls and floor were alike composed of gravestones, whole and broken, and carved fragments of monuments; the inscriptions clear and legible on some, on others defaced by time and carelessness.

"When most of the Priory was burnt," continued Bridget, "this new part was built as much as possible with the ruins of the old. The chapel roof fell in, and part of the walls fell, too, so a great deal of the chapel is here. Some of the monuments are from the church. I don't know why they should have been taken; but, in Queen Anne's days, people do not seem to have had much respect for antiquity, or anything. They simply helped themselves as appeared convenient."

"I never dreamt of anything half so extraordinary as this!" exclaimed Medlycott, going from one stone to another, and deciphering, with Bridget's assistance, the worn sentences thereon.

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Even Cynthia began to be interested, and, like her companions, wondered and guessed at the life-stories of the long-dead men and women, whose memorials were here so strangely packed away.

"This," said Bridget, pointing to a broken slab, "is part of the tomb of Sir Jocelyn Wynyard. He went to the Crusades with Edward the First, and, on his return, did great penance for some unknown crime, desiring that he might be buried plainly in the Priory chapel, with no effigy such as was usually sculptured of a Crusader. You see, he beseeches all people not to remember him by his 'defaulte.' I wonder what his 'defaulte' was."

Medlycott slowly read the curious old spelling.

"Pray you alle. Praye for the soule of Jocelyne Wynyarde Knyght whyche departed out of thys world the iii daye July the yere of our Lord MCCLXXXIV. (illegible) whyche cors was layd in a faire chest (illegible) stone afore the west door. Remembre not myn defaulte myn orgultye and myn (illegible) onlie myn dolorous deth and repentynge. On myn soule God have mercye . . . ."

Beneath the inscription was a rough carving, somewhat resembling a cross-barred grating.

"I have often wondered whether that portcullis carved beneath the words bears any reference to the crime. Perhaps it is meant for a prison grating, not a portcullis," said Bridget.

Medlycott stooped down to examine the carving more closely.

"It is of much later date than the epitaph. You can tell that by the comparative clearness and sharpness of the cutting. It is not obliterated anywhere, as many of the words are."

Bridget looked.

"I never noticed that before."

Cynthia looked, too, over her sister's shoulder.

"But why," she asked, "should that portcullis, or whatever it is, have been added long after? And it is unfinished. Some of the spaces have knobs in them, others not."

"Very odd. I don't understand it," Medlycott spoke, slowly, reflectively. As you say, it may represent a grating—a grille. "Ah!"—a light seemed to break upon him—"perhaps that is it! A grille! Where is a piece of paper?"

He pulled several letters out of his pocket, and, unfolding them, tried them on the carving. They were far too small to cover it.

Both the sisters had stood for a moment bewildered. Then Bridget exclaimed:

"I understand! I will fetch some drawing paper!"

She ran off, and Cynthia turned to the Australian.

"What is it you are going to do? What is a grille?"

"This carving," he explained, touching the graven stone, "this that we have been calling a portcullis, may, I think, have been intended to point out certain words of the inscription. There are, as you noticed, knobs in most of the squares formed by the crossing lines. Only a few of the spaces, perhaps, fit to words of the epitaph. So I propose to put paper over the carving, trace it, cut out the blank spaces, and then fit the paper over the epitaph. Then we shall see if my surmise is correct."

"But if the carving is of much later date than the inscription, as you thought—and, indeed, it looks newer and fresher than the letters—how can it have anything to do with Sir Jocelyn's epitaph?"

George looked puzzled again.

"True; that certainly goes against my theory, Yet I can hardly believe that the sculpture has been accidentally left unfinished. The more I look at those spaces, the more they appear to have been left blank on purpose. Still, this may be mere fancy."

"No, no! I'm sure there is a wonderful discovery in it," cried Bridget, arriving breathless, and overhearing the last words. "We shall find Sir Jocelyn's history, or a hint of it. Here are pencils and scissors, and I've brought a whole roll of drawing paper."

The tracing was quickly made, the blank squares carefully marked and cut out, the paper placed over the worn, half-defaced sentences, when, through the cut-out spaces, appeared the words:

"The iii . . . stone . . . afore the west door."

"What can it mean?" ejaculated Cynthia.

"The third stone before the west door?" repeated Bridget. "That means the chapel door, because Sir Jocelyn's tomb was in the chapel, a raised tomb. This slab was the end of it."

Medlycott removed the paper, and once more the words stood out:

"The iii . . . stone . . . afore the west door."

He sprang up.

"Shall we examine this third stone? Where is the chapel?"

"The chapel is in ruins. It was burnt at the fire, you know. How unfortunate!" and Cynthia clasped her hands.

George's face fell. He was feeling the ardour of an antiquary and explorer combined, and a check was trying.

"But the pavement is there," interposed Bridget, "and part of the walls still standing, and the west doorway, though the door is gone. I am sure we can find the stone."

The chapel was picturesque in its ruin. The roof was gone, and of the walls only the north and west were standing, and these were partially destroyed. But ivy had crept about, and lichen and wallflowers had found a footing here and there, and through the great arch of the west doorway one looked across the slope of the garden on to the shining river and the old mill. The monotonous drone of the wheel was filling the air as Medlycott and the two girls counted and re-counted the mossy slabs beneath their feet.

"One—two—three! I am sure this is the third stone that is meant. It is in a direct line from the middle of the doorway."

"But, Bridget, the stone might be the third sideways, against the wall, you know—this one;" and Cynthia touched a cracked slab with the tip of her shoe.

"Or this one," said George, indicating a third stone, exactly opposite Cynthia's, "unless a third stone in the wall was meant."

This was a new idea. They scanned the massive archway and its adjoining walls with eager eyes.

"There are dozens of third stones in the walls, taking both sides," said Bridget dolorously.

"Well, suppose we begin with the pavement, as we have not much choice there," suggested Meddlycott. "Where can I find tools?"

"There is a spade in the corner. Perhaps that will not do?"

"It might; I'll try. At which stone shall I begin?"

"At Bridget's, I think," said Cynthia; "after all, I believe she is right."

The rain and dew and frost of a century had made many a crack in the once smooth pavement, and

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emerald blades of grass had sprung up in those crevices forcing up the loósened stones, so that Medlycott found little difficulty in raising the slab.

"There is nothing!" exclaimed Cynthia; "only the wet earth. Look, Bridget!"

"We may find something if we dig," said George, pausing with the stone half raised. "Will it matter if I throw this over and perhaps break it?"

"Not in the least. Why, nearly all the stones are broken already."

The slab fell over with a thud, unbroken; and George began digging cautiously.

The spade struck something that gave out a sharp click. What was it?

He carefully moved away the dark, moist earth—the girls watching with breathless interest—and brought out a small, covered metal goblet. The lid was difficult to open, so rusted was it by its long interment in the damp earth.

Within was a roll of discoloured leather, out of which fell a narrow strip of parchment, closely written.

Medlycott picked it up and handed it to Cynthia, saying smilingly:

"I must not pry into family secrets."

"I am sure it does not matter," she replied. "Besides, the writing is so faded I can hardly read it. Can you, Bridget?"

Bridget looked over her sister's shoulder, and slowly read aloud:

"On the twentieth day of February, in this unhappy year of 1643, wherein I have seen Sir Peter Wynyard slain by his own gateway, and his only son driven out of England by ungodly men; I, Anselm, Priest, thinking that no longer could I with safety retain the jewels and monies intrusted to my care by Sir Peter, did, with the ayde of the miller, John Fenn, put all the said jewels and monies into an iron boxe, and did conceal the said boxe in the earth, behind the stone which is in shape somewhat like a heart, on the right side of the banke, by the mill-wheel. This I did, seeing that the mill-stream did seem to be the one only place of security, so that the miller, John Fenn, could always faithfully overlook the place. But this I write by reason of the sudden and lamentable death of that worthy man and good friend, the miller. For that I cannot wholly trust his son, I herewith have sent to France, by a faithful brother, that he should enjoin the young Sir Simon to study well the tomb of his ancestor, Sir Jocelyn, for thereon have I written a message which it behoves him to look unto. But if, by any evil chance, it happen that Sir Simon return not, it is my hope that some of the family may be led so to note the message on the tomb, and thus be led to discover this which I write, and so regain that which I have secured from the grasp of the evil-doers."

Bridget paused and gasped.

"It can't be true!"

"Why not?" asked George. "We'll look. It would be grand to find that box. Have you read all?"

"There follows a list of the things hidden. I wonder if they are as valuable as they sound. Here they are," and Bridget read out the names of the treasures, which included several gold church ornaments of immense value.

When her sister had finished Cynthia glanced at the displaced slab. "Don't you think that stone ought to be put back? Of course, the chapel is ours; but, perhaps, it is well not to excite any curiosity as to what we have been doing, and the maids come here sometimes."

Medlycott agreed as to the wisdom of this, and smoothing the earth, restored the slab to its former position; after which, the three carried their great news to Mrs. Wynyard.

"Think, mother! we shall be rich if this box is found," murmured Cynthia's soft tones; "and all owing to Mr.

Bridget looked over her sister's shoulder.

Medlycott. Now, how shall we get the box? I am longing to see whether it is really there or not. I feel quite nervous about it!"

"The miller would stop the wheel, I am sure," said Cynthia; "he is a very good-natured man. Then some one would have to wade in, unless the stone can be reached from the top of the bank."

"That some one would be me," said Medlycott. "What a singular thing it is that the miller who helped to conceal the box should have died! Had he lived, you would never have heard of the treasure. He would have told his heir on his return. By-the-way, is that Sir Simon the ghost?"

Bridget nodded.

"Yes, he's the ghost. When the Puritans killed his father, he escaped to France, and came back at the Restoration."

"Everyone who knew the secret seems to have died," Cynthia remarked thoughtfully; "the miller, the priest, and the priest's messenger. Had they lived, Sir Simon would have got the treasure; then, perhaps, he might not have turned out the villagers."

"And not have been a ghost doomed to keep the box company under the mill-wheel," said Medlycott. "I fancy the proximity of that box must rather annoy him. He must be continually reflecting on the uses to which he could have put its contents."

Mrs. Wynyard had been reading the strip of parchment. She now laid it down, and said:

"I'm afraid, girls, that even if the box is still by the

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mill-wheel, we should have some difficulty in claiming the ownership."

"But there's the evidence!" Medlycott pointed to the parchment.

"I am not sure of the law in these matters," she continued. "The land on which the mill stands does not now belong to the Wynyards. It did once, but was sold about fifty years ago. I fear the box could be claimed as treasure-trove by the present owner of the soil."

"Impossible!" ejaculated the Australian. "I, too, am ignorant of the law here, yet that parchment appears to me conclusive."

"Yes," hesitatingly; "but we should be obliged to prove our claim, and litigation is so expensive."

"Sooner than put all these lovely things into a lawyer's pocket, I'd leave them where they are!"

And Bridget's sentiments were fully shared by the others.

"One may surely steal one's own property," said Medlycott, after a pause. "I will steal this box for you. I am certain I can manage it. The wheel stops on Sundays, of course. I will go at dusk."

Cynthia looked doubtful.

"I'm afraid the miller and his family would see you. The house is so close to the mill. Also all the village—if Lulham can be called a village—is more alert on Sundays. People have nothing to do but to notice their neighbours, and, naturally, anything unusual would attract their attention more readily than on any other day. There are, including ourselves, just twenty-seven human beings in Lulham, and the mill-wheel being such a feature of the place, the twenty-seven pairs of eyes often glance towards it. I fear Sunday evening is not a very good time for exploring."

"On week days the wheel often works till quite late, and there is a tiresome moon now," finished Cynthia, as a climax to the various difficulties she had enumerated.

"The moon will wane," said Bridget oracularly, "and I really believe, Cynthia, that if we had another of our family ghost nights like last—I mean one of Sir Simon's favourite dark and stormy nights—Mr. Medlycott might search by the mill-stream for hours, and never be noticed by anybody. If anyone did catch a glimpse of him, they would think it was Sir Simon and run away."

"The river is swollen on stormy nights," objected Cynthia.

"But not the mill-stream. When the wheel is still, that is quiet and shallow enough for anyone to wade in if they wish."

The Australian was deep in thought. Mrs. Wynyard sat studying the parchment. There was a minute's silence.

"I have it!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "I will be mistaken for Sir Simon. I will wait for a dark night, and I will go down to the mill-stream dressed as Sir Simon. Have you any old coats of that period? If not, I'll run up to London and get one. Then, if I am accidentally seen, I shall be merely a ghost taking his usual exercise."

"Splendid," cried Bridget. "Mother, have we any old clothes of Sir Simon's time?"

"Not of so early a date as that; but in the blue garret I think there are some of the time of the first George, or, perhaps, of Anne. Will not these be quaint enough, if you really mean to try this scheme, George?"

Mrs. Wynyard smiled on the young man as she spoke. She liked him, and, therefore, was ready to fall in with any idea that he suggested; but this notion seemed to her a mere freak of youth. It might, she thought, amuse him and the girls. As for the box, she did not believe it was there. Doubtless, it had been removed by the priest, and squandered by Sir Simon.

"Oh, yes, I shall certainly try, Mrs. Wynyard," Medlycott replied. "The very first stormy night will see me personating your family ghost, if you will pardon the liberty?"

"You had better ask Sir Simon to excuse you," said Bridget, laughing.

"Suppose we should see both of you, the real and the sham ghosts, walking together up the garden? Ugh! how deliciously horrid!"

"I wish you had no such creepy fancies!" But, notwithstanding her protest, Cynthia laughed with the others.

They were merry enough, too, when they trooped up to the old blue garret, startling the spiders, and disturbing the dust of years.

"Why haven't we come up here long ago, Cynthia?"

Bridget made this remark in meditative surprise as they opened ancient trunks and pulled out garlands of bygone days.

"I did come once, but there seemed to be nothing very pretty. I did not look in all the boxes, though. This is a smart coat!" holding up a mulberry-coloured satin that goldsmiths might have worn.

"Won't that do? Suppose I try it on?"

Medlycott threw off his own coat, and struggled into the mulberry satin. It had been made for a smaller man than the Australian.

"When I begin digging for that treasure," he remarked, giving a pull to the lapels, "this gorgeous garment will split across the back!"

"That will not matter," said Cynthia. "You are supposed to be Sir Simon, and it will not be wonderful if his clothes show signs of wear, considering that he has walked about in them for more than two centuries."

"And in such weather!" chimed in Bridget, and their laughter rang through the old attic, little used to such merriment.

"If I had a hat of some odd sort, I should do," pursued George, surveying himself in a cracked mirror. "On a dark night nobody will notice my nineteenth-century waistcoat and trousers."

Bridget rummaged in the old trunk.

"There must be a hat somewhere! Oh, yes! here is a red one, three-cornered, and turned up with gold lace!"

"The very thing!" Medlycott put it on. "Now I am complete!" He regarded himself in the mirror with much satisfaction. "Had I not better take this brilliant attire to my own room, ready for the first stormy night?"

"Take care the servants don't see the things," Cynthia warned him, "or your ghostship will be discredited."

"I'll lock them up. I wish we knew the Finnish charm for rain and wind; we would get up an especial storm. I'll find that box, if I spend whole nights in the mill-stream in company with Sir Simon."

CHAPTER III.

THE TREASURE.

NEARLY three weeks elapsed before Medlycott could put his idea into execution—three weeks of mild, sunny weather; spent by the Wynyards and their guest in joyous wanderings about the country during the short golden days. And how happy the long, cosy evenings

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were! Poor Mrs. Wynyard brightened visibly under the stimulus of the young man's presence.

"How dull we shall be when you are gone!" Bridget exclaimed one day.

"Not at all," he promptly responded, "I mean to take all three of you back with me. I have arranged the programme. I find that hidden treasure; I wait till you have settled matters, then you come on a long, long visit to my mother, and probably you end by remaining altogether in Australia."

It was not the first time he had said this, smiling confidently. Mrs. Wynyard would smile, too, but shake her head. Bridget was quite ready to go, but doubtful as to whether she would remain. Cynthia made no comment, yet the Australian did not seem abashed by her silence; rather the reverse, for her sister observed that he addressed his remarks more particularly to Cynthia than to the others.

At last came a dark night, with gusty showers, and Medlycott announced his intention of setting off as soon as the sound of the mill-wheel ceased. He had carefully noted the stones built in the bank on the right of the wheel, and was sure he had detected the one "in shape somewhat like a heart," and would be able to find it in the dark.

The mill-wheel ceased its song at seven o'clock that evening; but Medlycott resolved to wait till Lulham had gone to sleep.

It was nearly eleven when, attired in the mulberry satin coat and gold-laced cocked hat, and carrying a spade and mattock, he stole out of a side door into the shrubbery path leading to the river.

"How it rains! do take an umbrella," whispered Cynthia.

Whereupon both he and Bridget burst into smothered laughter, restrained lest their mirth should attract the notice of any chance wayfarer.

"Am I not incongruous enough already?" he whispered back. "I'm the ghost of a roystering cavalier, dressed in a Victorian shooting suit, a coat of Queen Anne, a hat that might have been worn by Butcher Cumberland, and I am carrying a mattock and spade. Must I add an umbrella?"

He disappeared in the darkness, still laughing, and the girls returned to the Prior's parlour, where Mrs. Wynyard sat by the fire, prophesying failure.

The night was not particularly cold; the west wind was mild, despite its violence. It rushed shrieking through the trees and whistled and moaned over the river.

Medlycott glanced back as he crossed the little bridge. There was no light in any house, save that gleaming from the Priory. He looked up at the mill, it was dark and silent; the miller's house dark likewise. Here, at his feet, was the great wheel, quiet now in one of its brief pauses from labour; here, also, was the soft lapping of the checked stream, so different from the swollen rush of the river at his back.

He let himself cautiously down into the water, it was not deep, he had ascertained that. Not daring to strike a light lest the glimmer should be observed, he felt, for the heart-shaped stone, and proceeded to dig it out of the bank. Owing to the darkness, his progress was slow. By-and-bye, he heard the church clock strike twelve. Steadily he worked on; the stone was becoming loose. He dug harder; the fragments of earth slipped down into the water; then a heavier splash, and the stone was gone!—lying at his feet in the stream.

He felt in the hole: there seemed to be nothing but earth. Carefully he put in the spade, it struck something hard—metallic; and in a minute or two more, Medlycott had dug out a square, heavy box. He could scarcely refrain from uttering a shout of triumph as he clambered out of the mill-stream.

His head and shoulders were just rising above the

They opened the ancient trunks.

bank, when he was startled by a yell of affright from the bridge, and saw in the dim light a boy running wildly back towards the village.

Wondering what could have brought the lad out so late, George took to his heels with as much alacrity as the boy had done, and ran across the bridge into the Priory grounds as hard as he could, fearing the shout had roused the miller's family.

The side door had been left unlocked, and he and a gust of wind and a shower of rain drops all burst in together.

"Well!" cried the girls in concert, rushing out of the Prior's parlour to meet him.

"I've got it!" holding out the box triumphantly; "and as I was scrambling out of the stream a boy on the bridge raised a blood-curdling yell, enough to wake the whole place; so I've had to run for it!"

"And you are so wet!" exclaimed Cynthia, perceiving that he was already standing in a little pool that had dripped from his garments.

"I'll give this to Mrs. Wynyard, and then change my clothes. I'm not fit to come into a room."

Mrs. Wynyard's astonishment on beholding the box—a real, tangible iron box—was extreme; but after the first moment's amazement, she recovered herself, and said:

"How clever and good of you, George! I fear however, it will be found empty. That man whom the priest did not trust—the miller's son—you know, probably emptied it and replaced it."

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The girls' faces elongated; but Medlycott said cheerfully:

"It is too heavy to be empty, Mrs. Wynyard."

"Ah," lugubriously. "Then he filled it with brickbats. Do go and put on dry things, George, or you will be ill. There is some hot coffee ready for you."

He laughingly protested against the brickbats, and disappeared upstairs, while the girls debated the question of brickbats versus jewels.

"To find a treasure is too good to happen to us." Yet even as she uttered these gloomy sentiments, Mrs. Wynyard's face gleamed with a faint hope that the rusted box might contain release from the poverty which kept her daughters hopelessly immured in Lulham Priory.

She clasped her hands tightly when Medlycott returned and applied himself to opening the chest. Inside, in bags, and wrappings, were the money and jewels of the good priest's list.

"Now, who was right?" asked Medlycott. "No brickbats here, Mrs. Wynyard! Here are the two thousand angels," pouring the coins out on the table.

"And the standing-cup of gold," said Bridget, pulling off its coverings.

"And the gold image of St Katherine garnished with three sapphires and thirty-seven pearls," said Cynthia, holding up the statuette. "Mother, are they not lovely? What a pity that we must sell all these things."

Perhaps it was a pity, but one must be wealthy to retain such jewels for the mere pleasure of looking at them. The contents of the box realised over five thousand pounds; a sum sufficient, added to what they already possessed, to give the Wynyards that key to the outer world which they so much desired. Henceforth, they were not obliged to live in Lulham; and as though Fortune must needs give with both hands, it occurred to a wealthy man that the Priory, being situated within reach of two packs of hounds, would suit him as a hunting-box. Whereupon he bought it; and the money, though not a large sum, made a further and welcome addition to the Wynyards' income.

George Medlycott helped to settle all these matters.

"What can I do to express our gratitude to you?" said Mrs. Wynyard to him one bright February morning. "You have been like a son to me."

"That is what I wish to be," he replied, smiling. "Cynthia has promised to return to Australia with me. We hope to persuade you and Bridget to accompany us."

Again was Mrs. Wynyard boundlessly astonished—delightedly amazed.

"Did you know anything of this, Bridget?" she asked her younger daughter, when they were alone.

"Of course, mother. I saw it from the first. Cynthia wishes to be married at Lulham church. There will be just time for the wedding before we leave the Priory."

The village, consisting of the inhabitants of the two cottages, the mill, the rectory, and the clerk's house, was much excited by the news of Cynthia's engagement, and the Wynyards' intended departure.

"Ah," said the miller to Bridget, "we'll be sorry to lose ye; but we might ha' known ye were bound to leave the place afore long. One bad night in December, Joe Tyler's lad wur coomin' to my missus past midnight fur to borrow peppermint cordial fur his grandam, when he see Sir Simon as plain as life, arising from under the mill-wheel, wheer he wur laid, as ye know, Miss Bridget. Th' lad wur that scared he run whoam, an' his father had to coom fur th' peppermint instead. An' the next morn a big stone wur gone out of the bank theer"—the miller pointed to the right of the splashing wheel—"leaving a big hole, too! I got it up, and put it back, thinkin' it wur accident. But I see now it wur Sir Simon a-burstin' out, ready to go wi' ye. That's what it wur, Miss Bridget; he wuldna' be left behind, no matter how tight they'd laid him. Though I'd an idea he wur right under the wheel," added the miller reflectively; "but happen he wur bound to coom out sideways loike."

Which speech of the miller's gave Medlycott extreme delight when Bridget repeated it to him.

So the belief lingers in Lulham that Sir Simon broke his ghostly bonds to accompany his descendants to Australia, where Cynthia Medlycott sits in a verandah, heavy with stephanotis and bougainvillea.

Mrs. Wynyard lives with the Medlycotts; but Bridget has married the great traveller, Kent Laidlaw, and they have set off to explore the ruined cities of some of the South American countries.

"I do not believe, George," says Cynthia to her husband, "they will ever find anything so exciting as that grille you discovered on Sir Jocelyn's tomb."

C. L. A.

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RURAL HEROES.

A Story of the Franco-German War.

FROM THE FRENCH OF LABARRION.

CHAPTER I.

JEAN PEGOLAN, owner of a farm in the village of Eyvettes, is in high good humour this evening.

About him the dry leaves are dancing in the melancholy autumn wind and the sun is darting long, reddish rays through the bare boughs; above, the sky is blue as blue can be; and from the woods rises a pungent, aromatic odour. Jean Pegolan, sentient through his tough hide, of some small part of all this poetry, this serenity of nature, whips up the grey with a will and turns her head homeward.

It is quite true, to be sure, that the Prussians are marching on Paris, that here they have sacked a village, there burned a farm to the ground, and further on shot some poor, inoffensive creatures dead. But, I ask you, what difference can that possibly make to Jean Pegolan? Neither his house, nor his cattle, nor his crops, have suffered in the least from the invasion. He saw some of the enemy at the neighbouring town, where he has just been to sell some of the produce of his farm, and, dear me, he has not found that they are such monsters. They are men like any others.

When he has passed the Green-Cross and sees the village before him, with its church steeple of grey slate and the gilt weather-vane shining in the sunset, our honest farmer has a vision of the steaming dish of soup which awaits him on the table at home, that brings the water to his mouth.

"Hi! Get up!" But instead of "getting up" the grey comes to a sudden standstill.

A Prussian estafette, in passing, has seized her bridle, and sharply turns her out of the way. Then as Pegolan is too slow in making room, he raises his whip and slashes it across the farmer's face, from ear to ear.

Certainly, Jean Pegolan has always expressed the greatest respect for the conqueror, but, this time, rage gets the better of him. He rises to his feet, seizes one of the benches of the cart and the Prussian rolls off his horse the next moment, with a broken skull.

The shadows are growing deeper across the road, the woods are very still, the moon is creeping up the horizon half-hidden behind a transparent veil of clouds.

Pegolan, who is now trembling in every limb, looks furtively about him. No one has seen the deed. His Prussian lies there in the ditch, kicking convulsively, face downwards. As for him, he will assuredly tell no tales!

"Come, get up! Hi!"

And the grey starts off at a gallop.

CHAPTER II.

THEY have all been pushed and locked into the church like a flock of sheep. There they are, sitting in groups in the nave, some very pale, others very red, all silent, their throats contracted by fright. A crude white light falls from the windows of unstained glass and throws large pale squares on the peasants' blue frocks or illumines pitilessly some faces upon which abject fear may be read in the drawn mouth and pinched nostrils. In the back of the sanctuary, over the altar, with an unlit taper on either side, a large plaster crucifix hangs—the tortured limbs stretched and racked, the outspread arms seeming to implore pardon and pity for all. Faint heavy odours of autumnal foliage come from the neighbouring cemetery, and one hears the chirping of the sparrows disputing among themselves amidst the gravestones.

The night before, a Prussian patrol had found, near the Green Cross, the body of a murdered soldier. It is necessary to make an example. And so, since dawn, a battalion of *chasseurs* have invaded the village and, by order of the commanding officer, have imprisoned within the church walls every able-bodied man in the community. That morning—until the stroke of noon—has been given them to point out the guilty one or to make personal confession; that hour has passed, one of the men will be picked out at random, and the village burned.

And now it is 11.30 o'clock.

Oh! If they only knew the murderer, the assassin, the bandit, who has brought all this upon them, while they were vegetating along tranquilly in the midst of the ruins of their country, how gladly and quickly would they, good people, denounce him! If necessary they would wreak vengeance upon him with their own hands. But they do not know him; and meantime the minutes hurry on, and none dare take the initiative, none assume the responsibility of singling out the criminal.

He who could solve their perplexities, who might cry: "I am the murderer, the assassin, the bandit!"—he, Jean Pegolan, is very careful not to breathe a word.

He sits in the shadow of the confessional, with his sealskin cap drawn over his eyes and his heart beating wildly within him, and thinks of his wife, who is so dainty and so kissable; of his cows, who are comfortable in their stalls; of his hay, all well stowed away in his lofts, and he tells himself that to die would be to leave all that to all eternity, that one only dies once, that he would be very much of a fool to give himself up to justice, and that after all, he never killed the Prussian intentionally. The reasonings suffice to quiet his conscience. If the choice happens to fall on an innocent man—well, my faith, it cannot be helped. Everyone's surely bound to look after himself in this base world.

Hark! the clock, a quarter to twelve. Only a quarter of an hour left.

The last stroke dies away in slow vibrations and silence hangs again under the high vaulted ceiling like some invisible presence. The heavy rhythmic tread of troops approaching, then stopping, sounds from without. A hoarse cry of command, next, multitudinous guns strike the ground, with a dull thud.

A decision must be reached—and at once.

Some one speaks a name—in a whisper only—yet everyone heard it.

Then, hastily, hurriedly, with the feverish eagerness of people who dread death, everyone repeats it. Jean

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Pegolan, the Eyvettes farmer, draws a long breath. The name is not his.

It is that of a poor devil, half-woodcutter, half-poacher, a Red Republican, who voted a "nay" at the last elections.

He has a sick wife and three little children, the eldest of whom can but barely walk, and these will be left without bread by his death. But that cannot be helped. Perhaps the fellow did not do the deed. But then he was quite capable of doing it. Besides, he is only a poor wretch, while they are all comfortable farmers, in easy circumstances. Justice above all things.

In vain does the poor wretch protest his innocence. The evening before, he was ailing—a wrench he got in felling a tree. He had been on his bed without stirring, all day. They could make inquiries. They would see he had not been out of his house. All in vain does he throw himself at their feet, his voice choked with anguish and fear. All in vain does he invoke their pity. What is to become of his children if he is to die? His wife will never be equal to the task of providing for them.

No one answers. Pegolan, in his corner, sits in a cold perspiration, fearing some change of opinion, some sudden relenting. But the others are only too happy to have come to some conclusion. They ask but one thing now, to be speedily rid of this man who moans before them, tearing his hair, and reproaching them for their ferocious egotism, their monstrous cruelty.

The door is thrown wide open and beyond it rises a forest of bayonets filling the small square, and nearer to the threshold the group of men charged with the execution have gathered, and the fatal instrument of death shines again in the warm, white light of noon.

And twelve o'clock strikes.

There is a cry broken by a detonation, and the smoke clearing away, the body of the woodcutter and poacher is seen lying on the steps of the church, and stiffening there, while one by one those men pass out beside it, the blood staining the soles of their feet. And the Prussian officers, with looks of speechless contempt, turn away revolted.

CHAPTER III.

Jean Pegolan has gained his own abode once more.

Heavens! But it is pleasant to be safe at home again after such an adventure! The chickens are clucking and scratching about in the barnyard, the pigeons are cooing on the roof, the ducks are waddling around a tiny pond that shines softly in the sun; from the stable, where the Prussians have not entered, comes the mellow lowing of the milch cows, and the grey's strident neighing forms a response. Sheaves of wheat are piled up with a golden luxuriance, in the coach-house, and the hay in stacks, shows at all the windows of the loft.

The farmer shakes himself; his clothes are still moist with perspiration. He enters the house and sees his wife in tears on her knees beside the bed. She starts up at the sound of his step, and stands before him, white as a spectre.

"What!" in a shrill voice. "You are not dead?"

Pegolan, stunned by this reception, stares mutely.

"It was you who killed the Prussian at the Green Cross! Don't deny it! I saw the blood on your blouse this morning!"

"Sh!—sh! It's true—but—don't denounce me, for pity's sake!"

"Ah!" cried the woman with unutterable disgust. "You needn't be afraid now! You know it's too late, and you have allowed another man to be shot in your place!"

"It isn't my fault, is it? I didn't say anything. It was the Mayor who picked out the other one."

"So! Well, do you know what, Pegolan? You're a blackguard! Good-bye!"

Pegolan lets himself drop into a chair, with flaccid legs, and something like remorse seizing him inwardly. For one moment his infamy is borne in upon him by the lightning flash of conscience. Good Lord! One isn't perfect. And as the carriage that is bearing away his wife to her father rolls out of sight he is still sitting there, all upset.

But these impressions wear away, little by little. Evening comes on, and the Prussians have left village with fifes and drums, abandoning to their fate the three children and the wife of the woodcutter, who will die of hunger. And Jean Pegolan has recovered all his good spirits!

What will you?

His farm is safe!

RESULT OF PICTURE PUZZLE COMPETITION.

A very large proportion of those readers who entered for the Picture Puzzle Competition announced in *Short Stories* for April 25th succeeded in putting the squares together correctly. It has been decided to award the prize of £10 to the competitor who forwarded the neatest correct solution, and the fortunate person is Miss M. Belchier, 50, Avenue Road, South Tottenham, N.

The fifty readers whose names appear below have each been sent a gold-plated pencil-case as a consolation prize for the correctness and neatness of their attempt:

W. Hood, 16, Broadway, Stratford, London.
Miss E. Scarborough, 1, Palace Crescent, East Molesey, Surrey.
J. Waller, 18, St. John's Hill, Clapham Junction.
J. H. Hudson, 15, Tivoli Road, Crouch End.
M. E. Turner-Newton, 19, Queen's Road, Brighton.
C. H. Fisher, 127, Mornington Road, Leytonstone.
G. Bawyard, 163, Gwyder Street, Mill Road, Cambridge.
A. Hook, 9, Canterbury Place, Lambeth Road.
Miss A. Pugh, 10, Willington Road, Landor Road, Stockwell.
W. Martinyant, 212, Algernon Road, Ladywell.
W. Cater, 28, Palmerston Road, Forest Gate.
A. E. Bowles, 35, Weston Street, Bradford, Yorks.
B. C. Smythe, St. Anne's House, Lewes.
Mrs. Armstrong, 17, Elm Grove, Eccles New Road, Manchester.
A. Sproat, 1, Elm Grove, Eccles New Road, Weaste, Manchester.
J. Ward, 227, Tonge Moor Road, Bolton, Lancashire.
E. J. Embleton, 60, Victoria Road, Aldershot.
G. K. Stubbs, 29, Park Street, Macclesfield.
L. Carletti, 89, Malpas Road, Brockley.
Mrs. M. Gatsell, 61, Ravensworth View, Rectory Road, Gateshead.
Miss M. Clarkson, "Swinfield," Cantilupe Street, Hereford.
S. H. King, Laurel Cottage, Great Berkhamsted.
Miss L. Adair, 21, Crawford Square, Londonderry, Ireland.
W. H. Jones, 7, Llewelyn Street, Sketty, Swansea.
Mrs. H. J. Callander, 6, Brunton Terrace, Sunderland, Durham.
W. Mills, Percy House, Old Trafford, Manchester.
S. V. Key, West Brom Street, Oldbury, near Bingham.
F. E. Sparrow, 80, Burns Road, Harlesden, N.W.
Miss A. Winter, Albert Villa, Bishopston, Bristol.
A. Wake, 6, Chesham Road, Brighton.
Mrs. G. Archer, 5, South Terrace, Bury Street, Lower Edmonton.
W. H. Barrett, 178, Tindal Street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.
F. H. Bottom, 190, Brooke Road, Clapton.
Mrs. S. J. Peacock, 72, Oxford Street, South Bank, Yorkshire.
H. Walker, 18, Cottrill Road, Dalston Lane, Hackney.
E. Newman, 2, Thanet Villas, Hanworth Road, Hounslow.
T. W. Lewis, Oswald Road, Oswestry, Salop.
H. W. Tinsley, 46, Rye Lane, Peckham.
N. G. Chambers, Belle Vue House, Durham.
J. A. Raven, 59, Alvington Crescent, High Street, Kingsland.
F. Santaubien, 11, Inverness Terrace, Burlington Road, S.W.
Miss F. Nuttall, 10, Stretton Road, The Fosse, Leicester.
R. Byford, 112, Caledonian Road, N.
J. R. Bell, 8, Great College Street, Westminster.
J. Needham, Lea Road, Gainsboro'.
S. M. Anderson, 5, Eldon Place, Barres Bridge, Newcastle-on-Tyne.
W. Robinson, 3, Landseer Street, Battersea Park Road.
G. T. Leake, 8, Rauleagh Road, South Belgravia, S.W.
G. Taylor, 28, Ernest Street, Rhyl, North Wales.
C. E. Warburton, Stocks View, Flixton, Manchester.

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LEGENDS OF WOLFVILLE.

BY "DAN QUINN."

Wolfville is a Cattleman's Settlement in Arizona, and the Characters in these Legends are Cowboys.

No. 10.—The Racial Antipathy of Mr. Enright.

"If my memory's dealin' a square game," remarked the old cattleman, as he moved his chair a bit more into the shade, "it's some'ers over on the foothills of the Floridas when Enright vouchsafes why he hates Mexicans.

"'Not that I loathes so much as I deplores 'em,' says Enright, the time I speaks of. 'However, I don't aim to be held as indorsin' of 'em or excusin' their existence; none whatever.'

"Enright's tellin' of this tale arises outen a trivial incident which a Mexican is the marrow of. We're out on the spring round-up an' we're combin' the draws an' dry arroyas over between the cow springs an' the Floridas, when one night a Mexican runs off a passel of our ponies.

"The hoss-bustler is asleep, I reckons, at the time this Mexican stacks in. He says himse'f he's layin' along the back of his bronco gazin' at the stars when the robber jumps at the ponies an' flaps a blanket or somethin,' an' away patters every hoof in the band.

"This yere Mexican don't run off with only about a handful. I takes it he can't round-up no more in the dark. When you stampedes a bunch of ponies that way they don't hold together like cattle, but plunges off diffusive. It's every bronco for himse'f, disdainful of all else, an' when it's sun-up you finds 'em spattered all over the scene an' not regardin' of each other much.

"But this yere Mexican, after he stampedes 'em huddles what he can together, as I says, mebby it's a dozen—and p'ints off into the hills.

"Of course it ain't no time when the sun shows the tracks till Enright, Jack Moore an' myse'f is on the trail. Tutt an' Dan Boggs wants so many from the round-up.

"It's one of the stolen ponies tips this greaser's hand. It's the second day and we all loses the trail, mebby it's fifteen minutes, an' we're smellin' along a canyon to find it agin, when from over a p'int of rocks we hears a bronco nicker. He gets the scent of an acquaintance which Moore's ridin' that away an' says 'How?' pony fashion.

"Thar's no need goin' into wearyin' details. Follerin' the nicker we comes surgin' in on our prey an' it's all over in a minute. Thar's two Mexicans, our criminal trackin' up with a pard that mornin'. But, of course, we all knows he's thar long hours back by the tracks, an' so it ain't no surprise.

"This yere second Mexican is downed on the go in. He shows a heap of interest in our comin' an' takes to shootin' us up mighty vivid, with a Winchester at the time, an' so Enright, who's close in by him, stretches him. He don't manage to do no harm, nohow, more'n he creases my hoss a little. However, as this yere hoss is some slothful an' bein' burnt that way with a bullet across the laig sorter livens him up a heap, I don't complain none. Still, Enright's all wise enough to copper the greaser for thar ain't no sayin' what luck the felon has with that little gun of his if he keeps on shootin'. So, as I observes, Enright downs him, an' his power-burnin' an' hoss-rustin' stops immejit.

"As for the other Mexican, which he's the party who jumps our ponies in the first place, he throws up' his hands an' allows he cashes in his chips for whatever the bank says.

"So we all ropes out our captive; sorter hog-ties him hand an' foot, wrist and fetlock that night, an' goes into camp all comfortable, where we runs up on our game.

"'Whatever be we goin' to do with this yere hoss-thief prisoner of ours?' says Jack Moore to Enright, the next day when we're saddlin' up an organisin' to pull our freight. 'He's shore due to bother us a lot. We're plumb sixty miles from Tutt an' the boys, an' ridin', herd on this yere saddle-coloured gent a-keepin' of him from lopin' off, is mighty likely to be a heap exhaustive. I knows men,' Jack remarks at the close, lookin' wistful at Enright, 'as would beef him right yere an' leave him as a companion piece to that capadre of his you downs.'

"'Natures as would execute a prisoner in cold blood, which I don't mean they is low, neither but it's speshul inconsiderate that away to go an' ca'mly kill a prisoner an' no court or committee authorisin' the same. I never knows of it bein' done but once. It's Mexicans who does it then; which is why they ain't none popular with me since.'

"'It's shore you calls a mighty indurated play, some he'pless man you've took that away, but as I states it's due to bein' a heap fatiguin' keepin' cases on this yere Mexican till we meets up with a quorum of the committee. Still it's our dooty an' of course we don't deal double nor put back cards on what's our plain dooty.'

"'What you states,' says Enright, 'is to your credit. but I'll tell you. Thar ain't no harm mountin' this yere marauder on a slow pony that away; an' bein' humane sufficient to leave his hands an' feet untied. Of course, if he takes advantage of our leniency an' goes stampedin' off to make his escape some'ers along the trial I reckins you'll shorely have to shoot.'

"Well, it shore turns out this yere Mexican is ornery

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enough where the trail skirts the river to turn sudden an' go plungin' across. But Moore gets him in mid-stream. As he goes over the bronco's shoulder, hat first, he swings on the bridle long enough with his dyin' hand to turn the pony so it comes out agin on our side.

"'Which I'm glad he lives sufficient to head that hoss our way,' says Moore. 'It saves splashin' across after him an' wettin' your leggins a lot.'

"It's that night in camp when Moore brings up what Enright says about the time the Mexicans downs a prisoner an' fixes his views of 'em for good.

"'It's a long time back, this yarn to any excessive degree, even yet. It draws the cinch some tight an' painful, an' I don't teach my mind to dwell on it no more'n necessary.

"'This is all when I'm a boy; mebby I ain't twenty years yet. It's durin' the Mexican war. I gets a stack of white chips an' stands in on the deal in a boyish way. All I saveys of the war is it's agin the Mexicans, which, while I ain't got no feud with 'em personal at the time, makes it plenty satisfactory to me.

"'It's down off two days to the west of Chihuahua one day, an' seven of us is projectin' around seein' whatever can we tie down an' brand, when some Mexicans gets us out on a limb. It ain't what you calls a square deal; still I reckons it's square enough, too; only it's what you calls strategic, which is offensive an' sneakin' as a play.

"'This yere Lieutenant who's leadin' us 'round permiscus, looks like he's some romantic about a young Mexican female, who's called the Princess of Casa Grande, which the repoote of this yere princess woman is bad, an' I strikes a story several times how she's that incensed agin Americans she saws off a dose of loco on a captain in some whisky he's allowin' to drink, an' he goes plumb crazy an' is led away home, where he dies.

"'But loco or no loco, this yere princess person is shore that good lookin' a pinto pony don't compare thar with, an' she gets her black eyes on this Lieutenant, an' that settles it. We rounds up her hacienda an' goes into camp.

"'Besides the Lieutenant thar's six of us. One of 'em's a shorthorn, just my age, which his name's Willis—Jim Willis.

"'Now I ain't out to make no descriptions of the friendship which goes on between this yere Willis an' me. I sees a show one time, when pesterin' round back in St. Looey—an I'm yere to remark I don't go that far East no more—which takes on about a couple of sports, who's named Damon an' Pythias. These two people's all right, an' game square folks; an' they shore deems high of one another. But at the time I sees this yere Damon an' Pythias, I says to myse'f, an' ever since I makes no hesitatin' assertion tharof, that the brotherly views them two gents entertains ain't a marker to Jim Willis an' me.

"'This yere Jim I knows since we're yearlin's. We jumps outen the corral together, an' goes surgin' off into the Mexican war like twins. An' bein' two boys that away among a lot of men, I allows thar ain't nuthin' before, then, nor after, which I loves like Jim.

"'As I observes, Jim an' me's in the outfit, when this yere Lieutenant comes trackin' around that Princess of Casa Grande which her love for him is a bluff an' a deadfall; an' the same gets all of us before we're through. An' it gets my Jim Willis speshul.

"'Mebby it's the third mornin' after we all meanders into this nest of Mexicans an' the Lieutenant lines out for that Princess of Casa Grande. We ain't been turnin' out early nohow, thar bein' nuthin' to turn out about; but this third mornin' somebody arouses us a heap vigorous, like they aims to transact some business with us. Which they shortly did; it's an outfit of greasier guerillas, an' we-all ain't nuthin' more or less than captives.

"'The ornery an' ongrateful part is that the Princess sends one of her own peonies scoutin' round in the hills to bring in this band of cattle-eaters on to us.

"'When the Lieutenant hears of the perfidy of this Princess female he's that mortified he gets a pistol the first jump he makes, an' blows off the top of his head.

"'Which, if he only blows off the top of hers, it would have gone a heap further with the rest of us. If he'd consulted any of us, it would shorely have been advised. But he makes at impulsive play that away, an' is that sore and chagrined, jest as I spreads it before you, he grabs a gun in a frenzied way, an' cashes his chips abrupt.

"'No, as I states,' says Enright, musin' to himself, 'if the Lieutenant had only downed that Princess who plays us in as prisoners so smooth an' easy, it would have been regarded he could have gone caperin' over the brink after her with the bridle off the next second an' we still talk well of him.

"'As it is, however, this riotous female don't last two months. Which it's also a fact that takin' us at that time must have been a heap onlucky for them greasers. Thar's nine of 'em, an' every last one dies in the next five months; an' never a one, nor yet the Princess, knows what the're against when they quits; or what breeze blows their light out. I knows, because me an' a party whose name is Tate—Bill Tate—never leaves them hills till the last of that outfit's got his heap of rocks piled up, with his little pine cross stickin' outen the peak tharof, showin' he's done jumped this earthly game for good.

"'This Bill Tate an' me breaks camp on these greasers together, while they're tankin' up on mescal, mebby it's two days later; an' they never got their lariats on us no more.

"'"You ain't got no dates; no speshul engagements with nobody in the States, have you?" says Tate to me when we're safe outen these Mexican hands.

"'"No," says I, "whatever makes you ask?"

"'"Oh, nuthin," says Tate lookin' at the sky sorter black an ugly, "only since you has the elegant leesure, what for a play would it be to make a long camp back in these hills by some water-hole some'ers, an' stand pat ontil we downs these yere greasers—squaw an' all—who's had us treed? It oughter be did; an' if we all don't do it none, it's a heap likely it's goin' to be neglected an' overlooked complete. It's too easy as a play; every horse thief of 'em lives right in these yere valleys, for I hears 'em talk. All we has to do is sa'nter back in the hills a whole lot, make a camp, an' pains we bushwacks an' kills the last one."

"'The way I feels about Willis makes the prospect mighty allurin', an' tharupon Tate an' me opens a game with these Mexicans it takes five months to deal.

"'But it's dealt plumb out, an' we win. When Tate crosses the Rio Grande with the army goin' back, he shorely has the skelp of every Mexican concarned.

"'But I wander from Willis. Where was I when I bogs down? As I says, this Lieutenant nabs a pistol an' goes flutterin' from his roost. But this don't do for these greasers. They puts up a claim that some American track up on one of their outfit an' kills him off, they says five days before. They allows that

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breakin' even on the deal one of us is due to die. Tate offers to let 'em count the Lieutenant, but they shakes their heads till the little bells on their sombreros tinklen, an' declines the Lieutenant emphatic.

"'They p'ints out this yere Lieutenant dies in his own game, on his own deal. It's no racket of theirs an' it don't go to match the man they're shy.

"'One of us six who's left has to die to count even for this greaser who's been called in them five days. Tate can't move 'em; all he says is no use, so he quits, an' as he's been talkin' Spanish, which the same is too muddy a language for the rest of us, Tate turns in an' tel's us how the thing stacks up.

"'"One of us is shorely elected to trail out after the Lieutenant," says Tate. "The rest they holds as prisoners. Either way, she's goin' to be a hard deep crossin' an' one's about as rough a toss as the other."

"'After a brief pow-wow the greaser who's actin' range boss for the outfit puts six beans in a buckskin bag. Five is white an' one's black. These greasers are on the gamble bigger'n wolves, an' they crowds round plenty gleeful to see us take a gambler's chance for our lives. The one of us who draws the black bean is to line out after the Lieutenant.

"'Sayin' something in Spanish which most likely means "Age before beauty," the Mexican makes Willis an' me stand back while the four others searches one after the other into the bag for his bean.

"'Tate goes first an' wins a white bean.

"'Then a shiftless, no-count party whom we all call "Chicken Bill," reaches in. I shorely hopes, seein' it's bound to be somebody, that this Chicken Bill acquires the black bean. But luck's agin us, Chicken Bill backs out with a white bean.

"'When the third turns out a white bean the shadow begins to fall across Jim Willis an' me. I looks at Jim, an' I gives it to you straight when I says that I ain't at that time thinkin' of myse'f so much as about Jim. To see this yere deal, black as midnight, closin' in on Jim is what's hurtin'; it don't somehow occur to me I'm likewise agin the iron myself.

"'"Looks like this yere amiable device of them greasers is due to run its brand on to one of us," says Jim to me, as I looks at him.

"'An' then, as the fourth man finds a white bean in the bag, an draws a deep sigh an' stands back, Jim says: "Well Sam, it's down to us."

"'Then Jim looks at me keen an' steady a whole lot; an' the Mexicans rather enjoyin' of the situation, ain't goadin' of us to hurry up none.

"'Now, when it's to Jim an' me they select me as the one to p'int up the next bean. Jim's still lookin' at me hard, an I sees the water start in his eye.

"'"Let me have your draw, Sam," he says.

"'"Shore," I replies, standin' a step off from the bag. "It's yours too quick."

"'But the Mexicans don't see it that away. It's my turn and my draw, an' Jim has to take what's left. So the Mexicans tells Tate to send me after my bean agin.

"'"Hold on a second, Sam," says Jim, an' by this time he's as steady as a church.

"'"Sam," he goes on, "thar's no use you all gettin' the short end of this. Thars reasons for you livin'; which my case is void tharof. Now let me ask you; are you up on beans? Can you tell a black from a white bean by the feel?"

"'"No," I says, "beans is all a heap the same to me."

"'"That's what I allows," goes on this Jim. "Now yere's where my sooperior knowledge gets in. If these Mexicans had let me draw for you I fixes it easy, but it looks like they has scrooples. But I listen to what I tells you, an' you beats the deal as it is. Thar's a difference in beans sames as in ponies. A black bean is rough like a cactus compared to white beans, which said last vegetable is shorely as sleek an' smooth as glass. Now here's what you does. Jest grope an' scout 'round in that bag till you picks out the smooth bean. That's your bean; that's the white bean. Cinch the smooth bean an' the black comes to me."

"'When Jim says all this it seems like I'm in a daze an' sorter woozy. I never doubt him for a moment. Of course I don't take no advantage of what he says.

"'I recalls the advice my old mother gives me; it's long enough ago now. The old lady says: "Samyul, never you let me hear of your weakenin'. Be a man, or a mouse, or a long-tail rat." So, when Jim lays it off about these two beans bein' smooth an' rough that way; an' the white bein' the smooth bean, I nacherally searches out the rough bean, allowin' she'll shore be black, which shows my intellect's can't cope with Jim's none.

"'The bean I bring to the surface is white an' pale as a ghost. My heart wilts inside of me, an' I feels white as the bean where it lays in my hand. Of course I'm some young them days, an' I feels white as the bean where it lays in my hand. Of course I'm some young them days, and it don't need so much to stagger me.

"'I recollects like it was in a dream hearin' Jim laugh.

"'"Sam," he says, "I reads you like so much sunshine. An' I shorely fools you up a lot. Don't you reckon I allows you'll double on the trail, p'int south if I says no'th at a show like this? The white bean is allers the rough, sandy bean; allers was an' allers will be; an' never let no one fool you up agin. An' now, Sam, *adios*."

"'I'm still standin' lookin' at the white bean. I feels Jim grip my other hand, as he says, "*Adios*," an' the next I hears is the bang of the Mexicans' guns. I starts up, some wild an' locoed, so Tate tells me, when the guns goes off. But Jim's dead then. He's out in a second, never bats an eye nor wags an ear.

"'Which now,' says Enright at the end, as he yanks his saddle 'round so he makes a piller for his head, 'which now you all is fully informed why I appears averse to greasers, I reckon I slumbers some. I never sees one I don't think of that boy Jim Willis, an' I never thinks of Jim but I wants to murder Mexicans.'

"Enright don't say no more; sorter rolls up in his blanket, drops his head in his saddle, an' lays a long time quiet, like he's asleep. Jack Moore an' me ain't sayin' nuthin', jest peerin' into the fire an' listenin' to the coyotes, without heedin' of neither. At last Enright raises his head off the saddle some.

"'Mebby it's twenty years ago when a party over on the Rio Grande allows as how Jim's aimin' to deal himse'f a hand from the bottom of the deck, when he onfolds to me about the habits of them beans. It takes seven months, a iron constitution, an' three medicine sharps, an' each as good as Doc. Peets, before he's regarded as outen danger.'"

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The Great Middlewick Bank Robbery.

CHAPTER XIX.

At the same time that Alfred Taylor was talking to Miss Denton, his friend Burton was walking towards the Middlewick Bank. It was past ten o'clock, and he was confident of finding the Manager there. He wished to see him. Having resumed the disguise he wore when first he came to Middlewick he was recognised as the trusted watchman chiefly concerned in capturing the criminals—and had, it may be said, become the hero of the town. It was impossible for him not to hear the complimentary remarks continually made about him as he went along.

Here and there he saw groups of people talking together, their admiring looks and gestures leaving no doubt that he was the subject of their remarks. He caught some of the observations of those whom he met face to face and was obliged to acknowledge the salutations of smiling townspeople whom he never remembered to have seen, but who insisted upon claiming acquaintanceship.

It will be understood therefore that when he entered the bank he was respectfully greeted and no questions were asked when he walked towards the Manager's room. Of course, everyone now understood what it meant when he took the position of watchman to the bank. It was to secure a chance which could best be gained by that little subterfuge.

Jack Burton was one of the cleverest detectives in London. To him belonged the credit of outwitting and imprisoning four of the most desperate criminals of the day, for the news had spread that he had lodged another, and the last, in goal. Jack Burton, as we shall continue to call him for a short while longer, encountered a slight disappointment; when he knocked and then pushed open the door of Mr. Bryant's room, the latter was empty.

He returned and spoke to the cashier.

"Do you know when Mr. Bryant will be in?"

The cashier glanced at the clock on the wall.

"We're expecting him every moment. I can't imagine what detains him."

"I will wait a little while."

"Won't you step into his room?"

"No, thanks, I'll take the settee, that is if Warren doesn't come in and claim it," added Burton with a smile, going over and sitting down.

The visitor hoped that the Manager would not arrive for a little while. He had secured a good point of view and wanted to look around him also for a few minutes, not forgetting also to use his ears.

Rutherford was busy at his desk. He cast a glance at the visitor and then bent over his work again. That single turn of his head revealed a distressed countenance which told of an almost intolerable load he was bearing on his young shoulders.

Business was brisk for a time and then came a lull, such as is occasionally seen in similar concerns. Rutherford turned his head again, but this time it was towards the cashier, to whom he spoke so quietly that but for the unusual silence Burton would have been unable to overhear the words.

"I think I must have a rest this afternoon, Stewart."

"You don't look well," was the cashier's sympathetic response. "What's the matter, influenza?"

"No, not that, but I've been out of sorts some days now. I hope a quiet afternoon will put me right again."

"Why wait till after lunch? Go home now and get the benefit of the day."

"It sounds tempting, but it wouldn't be fair to you, with so much to do."

"I can manage very well without you."

"Thanks all the same, but I'd really rather wait till midday," and to signify the question was settled, the bookkeeper turned to his work again.

Burton arose, and with a semi-military salute to the cashier said:

"It's hardly worth while my waiting longer for Mr. Bryant. I can drop in later, when he will be here."

"I'm sure he will be glad to see you," replied the cashier, returning the salutation.

At the next corner, Burton saw Mr. Bryant walking towards the bank. He had only to cross the street to greet him, but this he took care not to do. It looked as if, like his friend Taylor, he had changed his mind about wishing to meet the head of the bank.

Between two and three o'clock on the afternoon of that day, Rutherford, who had returned home under the plea of illness, came out of the door of the modest cottage with his coat closely buttoned and swinging a small cane in his hand. He walked slowly, as if with considerable suffering. He looked nervous and in need of the fresh spring air.

As he walked, he glanced to the right and left, but seeing no one in whom he was interested, moved in the direction of Mr. Bryant's residence, moderating his pace still more as he passed it, and looking up at the same window to which he had signalled some nights before.

The eyes, roving along the handsome front of the dwelling, were rewarded by a sight of Miss Denton, who was expecting him. She smiled and waved her hand; he lifted his hat in reply, and passed on. She stood at the window, gazing fondly after him as long as he was in sight, but he did not again look behind him.

At the first corner young Rutherford turned to the right and quickened his pace. The noticeable fact about his course was that he was now facing the open country and thus leaving the little town of Middlewick behind him. The further he went, the more rapidly he walked. It did not take him long to get out of Middlewick, when he struck out like a pedestrian training. He swung his light cane jauntily above his head, occasionally whipping the branches of some overhanging trees at the side of the road.

A colt was cropping the grass so close to the fence that Rutherford reached over and gave him a smart blow on his side. The startled animal, wheeled, let fly with both heels at the offender and galloped a hundred yards away in the pasture, when he stopped, faced him and snorted angrily at him as if challenging the young fellow to climb the fence and have it out. Altogether the book-keeper of the Middlewick Bank behaved like any person except an invalid.

A light farm waggon clattered along the road over the same course as that taken by Rutherford. The vehicle seemed in the last stages of dilapidation, and the single horse between the shafts made spasmodic attempts at a trot, urged thereto by the blows of his driver, the jerking of the reins, and some vigorous language. Such bursts of of speed were not continued long before the animal dropped abruptly to a walk again. This being slower than the pedestrian caused the farmer to fall behind, while the occasional spurts lessened the space between them.

The driver's appearance was in keeping with his horse and waggon. His shaggy hair fell about his shoulders from under his ragged hat. His clothes were old and of the fashion of years gone by. He sat on the right side of the single seat, holding the reins in his left hand, while his right was busily employed with the whip, which produced little effect upon the bony horse.

For half a mile the highway led through an attractive

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region with well-kept farms on either side. It was just the sort of spring weather for work, and numbers of boys and men were in the fields, but less than a mile away. Rutherford made another turn in the course he was following. This took him into a less frequented road and left towards a long stretch of rocky woods, which rose into hills of several hundred feet elevation beyond.

The ground being somewhat hilly and the distance to this point having been rapidly traversed, the young man showed signs of fatigue. He slackened his pace from the moment of entering on his new course. It was then that he looked searchingly around him. If he was hunting for anything, he did not find it, which fact it is to be assumed was not displeasing to him.

Meanwhile the old farmer who was having such a laborious time with his nag, turned into the less frequented road, though, as he expressed it, he was obliged almost to "almost saw his head off." Rutherford looked back with an amused expression, but gave the farmer and his animal no further attention.

At a distance of probably a quarter of a mile, the road entered the woods alluded to, where there was no fence on either side, and the ruts showed that days had passed since any vehicle had traversed the route. Rutherford had slackened pace again and had not penetrated far among the trees when he turned for the last time, moving at right angles to the highway.

On this occasion he did not follow any particular path, but passed among the trees as if guiding his steps by means of some landmark. The farmer had forced his steed to a trot once more and he went by the point where the foot-passenger had turned off with a fine display of speed. The figure of the pedestrian was seen now and then amongst the trees but they soon entirely hid him from the sight of anyone in the road. He did not look round at the waggon but walked straight on. A little way ahead the road made a turn to the left. The farmer did not go far along this, before he drew up to one side, so that he and his waggon would be out of the way of anyone passing along the highway. The horse was then forced among the trees when, with surprising nimbleness, the driver leapt out and hastily tied the halter to the limb of a tree.

Anyone studying the old man while thus engaged would have observed that his corduroy trousers were tucked in the top of his heavy boots, while the slouching coat descended to his knees and was secured in front by a single button, all the rest being gone. The observant spectator would have noticed another thing, that same frowsy farmer was well-formed and evidently was not only active in movement, but exceptionally powerful.

After securing the animal in a grassy patch, the man started diagonally in the direction taken by Rutherford a short time before. This course, if continued, and provided the other followed a straight line, must bring them together ere long. He walked like one accustomed to that kind of exercise, and was on the look-out for the young man who had turned off in the woods before he pulled up his horse at the side of the highway.

Burton, for the farmer was no other, had followed Rutherford all the way from Middlewick and he did not intend to lose him now, when it was evident that the one in advance had not the slightest suspicion of the trick which was being played on him.

"That young man can't be far off," he muttered as he advanced cautiously, "and I must be careful."

Despite the skill with which he moved, he narrowly escaped making a fatal blunder. The path wound in and out among the trees in such a way that it was impossible to see more than a few paces in advance. He was moving forward, as guardedly as possible, when he caught sight of his man a little in advance. But for the fact that Rutherford's back was towards him, he must have been discovered.

The startled Burton dodged behind the nearest tree, large enough to shelter his body, and removing his worthless hat, peered stealthily from his point of vantage.

Rutherford had also made use of a similar shelter, although it was not as large as that of the watchman, and he too was peeping at something apparently but a few feet away. Whatever it was, the thickness of the trees prevented its discovery by Burton. There must be a change of position before anything could be accomplished. This came about sooner than the watchman anticipated. Evidently Rutherford was dissatisfied with his post, for he stepped softly behind the tree and moved stealthily along the path, as if fearful that his footsteps would arouse someone in the vicinity. Suddenly he looked round and then resumed his advance in the same guarded manner as before. The winding path soon hid him from sight, and, at that moment, Burton emerged from behind his tree and followed him.

This peculiar course continued for but a few minutes, when the result was all that the watchman could desire. The path led into a natural opening clear of trees, though rocks and boulders were numerous. Rutherford had again sheltered himself and the man in the rear lost no time in doing the same.

The opening was less than half an acre in extent and standing near the centre was a third person, well-dressed, though fully as old as Jack Burton. The attitude of this individual was peculiar. His two hands were thrust into the pockets of his light overcoat, thus causing the end of his cane to project upwards behind his shoulder. He wore a tall silk hat, and his attitude and manner were those of a person meditating a step which he hesitates to take. He was upright, and kept glancing searchingly around him. Once he took several steps forward, then abruptly stopped and retreated again. This advance brought him close to the largest rock in sight. Something about that interested him. Rutherford was so absorbed in watching this person, that there was not the slightest chance of his looking behind him. The shifting, vacillating action of the third party, brought his countenance as distinctly into view as that of Mr. Bryant himself. Burton saw it, and it was so impressed upon his memory, that it will remain with him through life.

The singular hesitation could not last long. The person must decide one way or another. As if impatient with himself, he roused his energies, walked to the side of the rock, looked furtively round, and was in the act of stooping, when he abruptly stopped.

Frank Rutherford, in his agitation, had betrayed himself. He stepped from behind the sheltering tree, and as he did so, the man by the rock discovered him.

CHAPTER XX.

Rather singularly, Jack Burton very nearly committed the same blunder. Had he stood as near to the third man as did the younger, he would have been seen at the same moment; but he was sufficiently alert to return to his hiding-place in time to avoid detection.

"I wouldn't be in that book-keeper's shoes for something," was his conclusion. "There's safe to be a row."

The elder man, upon discovering that he was being watched, assumed an upright position and stood for several seconds staring at the young man. The conduct of the latter, under the embarrassing circumstances, was not lacking in a certain dignity. Instead of seeking to screen himself from recognition, he calmly walked forward and confronted the alderman.

"You scoundrel!" thundered the latter, with his cane upraised. "What do you mean by following me?"

The tones were so loud that they could have been heard considerably further away than where the watchman stood. But Rutherford's reply was in such a quiet tone that the listener did not catch a word of what was said.

"You have no business to follow me," continued the irate third party. "I'll thrash you within an inch of your life. What do you mean by such conduct?".

Again came the answer was so softly uttered that not a syllable reached the listener's ear. The stranger was gesticulating earnestly.

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"If I could only get near enough to learn what is going on, it would prove worth listening to, I suspect; but that is impossible. They would be sure to detect me, and then their combined wrath would descend upon *my* head."

For ten minutes the couple stood close together in the path, engaged in a low but exciting conversation. By-and-bye the observant watchman saw that Rutherford was doing nearly all the talking. The other listened attentively, but answered by shaking his head, swinging his cane, and shifting the weight of his body from one foot to the other as a person is apt to do when under great mental excitement.

Presently they turned round and began slowly walking along the path towards the highway where the watchman had left his horse and cart.

This brought them so near to the eavesdropper that he dared not peep out from his hiding place. Nor was the risk of discovery counterbalanced by the distinctness with which he could overhear their conversation. Apparently each was so busy with his own thoughts that not a word passed between them until they had gone so far down the path that they were quite out of hearing.

Instead of following them, Burton waited till they had disappeared behind a curve in the path, when he turned towards the open space near him.

Meanwhile the others, following the winding trail until they came into the highway, when once again, and for the last time, they halted. For half-an-hour or more they faced each other, and talked like men deciding a question of life and death. The beauteous spring day drew to a close, the sun went down behind the hills, and the twilight gathered over forest and meadow, and still they talked and argued, grew angry, and then became cool, then one was sullen and then again each became interested.

But with the coming of night, the long-deferred decision was reached. Whatever the cause of dispute, it was settled between them, though apparently on the strange condition that Rutherford should leave the other to return to Middlewick, his companion remaining behind—for that was what took place.

The young man emerged from the deeper gloom of the wood into the open country and walked towards the town. The person from whom he had parted remained at the side of the highway gazing after him. His attitude was that of profound reverie.

Suddenly a waggon rattled along the road, journeying towards the town. The man instinctively stepped aside to allow it to pass, but paid no further attention.

"Hi, there, is that your team up yonder? If it is you'd better make a move, for the old horse has been standing there for hours."

The farmer who called to the other sat in an ordinary country waggon, and spoke in a voice loud enough to be heard a hundred yards away. The individual addressed looked up at him, but made no answer, and the farmer drove on, wondering what strange business could be going on so near his own home.

Night was now fairly well advanced, and the moon was shining. The person in the road unfolded his arms, heaved a deep sigh and turned into the woods. He was following the path over which he had already passed twice. Avoiding with care the dense overhanging vegetation, he followed the narrow trail until he once more stood by the rock in the clearing where he had discovered he was being watched.

Stooping down, he slipped his arm beneath the rock in search of something. The next moment he straightened himself, pressed his hands to his temples, and staggered like a drunken man.

"Heaven help me! it is gone," he moaned. Then, wildly hoping that some mistake had been made, he sprang back to the rock. "No, no! it cannot be! it cannot be! It was a mistake!"

He was now furiously scrambling with his hand under the great stone, as though he would overturn the enormous weight in his fierce effort to find something.

"No, it *is* gone. It has been stolen. I am ruined! I am ruined!"

CHAPTER XXI.

As Burton walked towards the highway, after leaving the two men, all sorts of conjectures flitted through his active brain.

"There can be no doubt that *something* is hidden under that rock," and he was about to bring it forth at the moment he made the discovery that another was watching him. That caused a change of purpose, and he made for the young man with the intention of giving him a hiding.

"I can't understand why he didn't. Rutherford must possess a persuasive tongue thus quickly to soothe his wrath. But the appearance of the other is so striking, that he may have attracted the attention of some one else beside the book-keeper and me. Well, I declare!"

It was at this point of his soliloquy that the very peril Burton had in mind appeared. Two forms were observed moving on the other side of the opening, and it hardly needed a second glance to identify them as a couple of tramps.

"They have seen the other and suspect the business that brought him here," was the conclusion of the watchman; "but they do not know where to look for the package. Had the visitor taken it from under the rock, they would have robbed him of it; but they expect him back, and then they will have a chance of getting it."

Convinced that he was right in his surmise, the question arose as to what he should do under the new conditions. Should he also wait, and warn the imperilled man. That would never do, for the ensuing complication would overturn all the plans he had formed; the whole scheme, in fact, would be spoiled. Of all the ideas that suggested themselves, there seemed but one thing to do. This required nerve, but that had never yet failed Burton.

He emerged from the shadow of the wood and made his way at a timid pace toward the rock which was such an interesting object to three persons just at this time. He paused every few steps and glanced furtively about as if afraid of being noticed. He showed no knowledge of the presence of the tramps, who, on catching sight of him, made haste to dodge down out of view. But Burton knew that two pairs of bleared eyes were watching his every movement.

Every feature of the forest opening was fixed so clearly in his mind that it was impossible to make a mistake, even in the gathering twilight. He halted at the precise spot where he had seen the other man stand, when about to stoop for a purpose that was self evident to the watcher. With a hurried glance round Burton dropped upon his knees and pushed his hand under the rock. Beneath it was a sufficiently large space to feel about with ease, but only a few seconds of groping were necessary, when his hand came in contact with *something*.

He recognised the touch of paper, and with a suppressed exclamation drew out an oblong package five or six inches thick, somewhat longer and not so wide. Instead of being tied with tape or twine, it was bound round with several strong elastic bands which held whatever was within in the smallest possible compass.

It was hardly the time, in view of what he knew about the tramps, for him to make an examination, but he could not resist the temptation. He deftly shifted enough of the bands to allow him to pull away the heavy paper from one end, and to gain a glimpse of what was within. He raised the end and looked at several of the oblong slips.

"I've got it!" gasped the finder. "Here is the whole £20,000 that was stolen from the Middlewick Bank several nights ago!"

Only the recollection of the two vagrants crouching among the rocks and boulders enabled Burton to retain his self-possession. The package of money was a big one, but he could handle it without difficulty. Under his flimsy outer coat was another one, strong and well made. Opening the front of this, he pushed the bundle carefully in to an inner pocket and buttoned the garment over it.

As he anticipated, he had hardly faced about, with the

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appearance of retracing his own steps, when the tramps rose from their hiding-place. A collision was inevitable, and Burton was prepared for it. He paused, as if startled, and stood still as they approached.

The couple were edging towards Burton with a purpose too manifest to be mistaken, and he saw that it would not do to trifle with them.

"Look here, guv'nor," said the more disreputable of the two threateningly, "if you don't give me back my package you took from under that there rock, my pal and I'll have to help ourselves. It's hard if a honest man can't leave his own in a safe place."

"Go along," was Burton's gruff reply. "The stones aren't yours. I put them there myself."

"That yer didn't! we did, we——"

"That proves the package isn't yours then, for it doesn't contain stones at all, and if you don't clear off, I'll shoot," said Burton, with a sudden change of front, seeing only too plainly that the tramp's threat was no idle one.

The moon had risen while this little affair was going on in the forest opening. The foremost tramp had just prepared for a leap upon the supposed farmer when he recoiled at the sight of the gleaming pistol, whose muzzle almost touched his nose. More than that, one of the chambers was discharged, the bullet nipping his ear, while a second whistled by the crimson countenance of his companion just behind him.

"That's just to let you know I'm ready for you," remarked Burton. "The next time I shoot, I'll kill you."

Without waiting to see whether or no he would carry out his threat, the two men dashed out of sight with ludicrous haste. Although their flight proved beyond doubt that they were defenceless, save for their own brute force, Burton yet took every precaution against giving them the slightest clue to his movements. With the utmost care he began a withdrawal from the spot, changing his course so that his enemies could not keep track of him, provided they did not hear the rustling of the leaves.

It was not necessary for him to go far before resuming the direct course to the highway. The straining ear detected no sound like that which had warned him of his peril, and he became confident that he had thrown the vagrants off his trail. This was unquestionably a great point accomplished, for when he repeatedly stopped and listened, he failed to hear anything alarming. Finally he dismissed all apprehension and advanced with less care than before.

But in thus protecting himself against one danger, Burton fell into an unsuspected dilemma. The several changes of direction, with no beaten path or landmark to guide him, resulted in a confusion of the points of the compass, as is inevitably the case with the most experienced ranger of the woods.

When certain that he had travelled far enough to reach the highway where he had left his horse and waggon, he was still among the trees, enveloped in gloom and with no idea of where he stood.

"I believe I am lost," he said with a shiver of dread, "and, if that is so, there's no chance of finding my way out before morning."

While the prospect was anything but pleasant, there was nothing in it, after all, to cause misgiving. The wayfarer found some consolation in smoking a cigar. By keeping the glowing tip free of ashes he was able to use it as a tiny lamp, now and then, and thus save himself some unwelcome experiences. But soon the weed was consumed, and growing tired of the enjoyment, he flung away the stump.

"I'll try a little longer—helloa!"

It was the neigh of a horse that caused this exclamation. It sounded to his left, not in the direction, as it seemed, of the highway; but, remembering his mistake, he turned towards the point, and had not gone far when, to his delight, he came across the horse and waggon with which he had come from Middlewick hours before.

So far as could be perceived in the darkness, the beast had not attempted to stir from his position since Burton had tied him there. But, remembering the interval had been long enough for him to become hungry, the man quickly unfastened the horse, climbed into the waggon, and took the reins and whip in hand. There was no need, however, of the latter, for, to the amazement of the driver, the animal instantly broke into a gentle trot which he seemed disposed to keep up the entire way home.

Shortly after turning in to the main road, Burton discerned a man ahead of him, walking quite rapidly. By this time the moon was well up in the sky, and he could see so distinctly that he recognised him as the one that had stood in the clearing and was about to take the package of money from under the rock when he desisted because of the presence of the book-keeper of the bank.

This individual, having partly rallied from his shock, was hurrying towards the town. He was in the middle of the road, but on hearing the rattle of the waggon behind him, stepped aside to allow it to pass.

As he came up alongside of him, Burton checked his horse.

"Have a lift, sir," he asked, looking down at the man.

"No thank you. I prefer to walk."

"I am going straight to Middlewick, and it will save you some time, for this animal, as you see, is a good goer."

Thus urged the pedestrian accepted the invitation, climbed nimbly up beside Burton, who once more started his horse at a trot.

It seemed like running a great risk, for he could not be certain that his passenger would not recognise him. Brief as had been his stay in Middlewick, he had been there long enough for many of the inhabitants to learn who he was.

It need hardly be said, however, that when he assumed the guise of a farmer, on applying at the livery stable for this wretched turn-out, he donned something in the nature of a disguise besides his shabby garments, while in keeping with his assumed character the watchman imparted a broad and peculiar accent to his voice while speaking to his passenger. But the latter was in no mood for talking. His responses, when there were any, were so curt that the pretended farmer soon gave up the attempt.

It was a strange situation indeed.

Arrived at the outskirts of the town, the passenger requested Burton to allow him to get out. He courteously thanked the supposed farmer for his kindness and disappeared along the main street, while the driver turned in the direction of the livery stable, where, after considerable difficulty, he had managed to hire the outfit.

It was not very late in the evening, and he managed to restore himself to something like his original appearance without attracting attention to the process. His old hat, with the hair and chin-whiskers attached, was slipped into his coat pocket; he smoothed down his trousers, and folded the shabby coat and carried it over his arm. This was so effective that when he presented himself at his lodgings he was admitted without question.

When certain he was quite alone, he unbuttoned his coat after carefully locking the door, drew out the package he had extracted from beneath the rock, and opened and counted the contents. There was exactly £20,000, the very amount stolen from the Middlewick Bank, and here it was in his hands, ready to be restored to the rightful owner.

He recalled the peculiar circumstances under which he had recovered it. If he chose he might retain every penny of it, and no suspicion could ever attach to him. Not a living soul besides himself knew that he had visited the woods and taken it from under the rock where it was hidden. Even if the tramps chose to tell their story, it could not turn the eye of the law to him. The farmer, who was the chief actor in that little drama, had gone out of existence.

(To be concluded.)

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THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Two Prizes of £1 1s. Each.

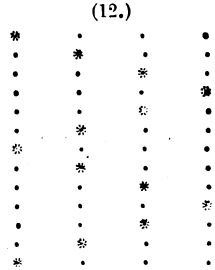
BELOW will be found the second batch of ten problems in the new series of "THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM." Two prizes of a guinea each is offered weekly to those competitors who answer correctly the greatest number of these problems. Consolation prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

RULES:

1. All solutions to be written on one sheet of paper.
2. Don't write the questions. Simply put the numbers and the answer against each.
3. Each set to contain the £100 coupon (found on second page of cover) for the current week.
4. All attempts to be in by Monday, May 18th.
5. Mark your envelope "Gymnasium."

(11.) Example: Behead "to put over" and leave "not under." Solution: C-OVER.
Solve the following problems in the same way:
(a) Behead "to dry" and leave "wet."
(b) Behead "a grain" and leave "frozen water."
(c) Behead "trifling" and leave "not heavy."
(d) Behead "to stop up" and leave "a curl."
(e) Behead "to draggle" and leave "a noisy crowd."
(f) Behead "a blow" and leave "the blues."

(12.)



Place the words defined below one on top of the other in their proper order, and the letters which fall on every asterisk on the above diagram will form a word signifying "additional."

1. A piece of music.
2. A kitchen utensil.
3. To be dull.
4. A stinging insect.
5. A high wind.
6. To repair.
7. To pull about.
8. A family quarrel.
9. Poison.
10. A sudden squall.
11. A small insect.
12. To worship.
13. To couple.

(13.) Place the words defined below—each of which consists of four letters—one on the other.
1. To tie together.
2. A loud sound.
3. An operatic air.
4. Voluble.
The initials, read downwards, signify to boast.
The initials, read upwards, signify clothing.
The finals, read upwards, signify a poet.
The finals, read downwards, signify a colour.

(14.) The number of periodicals issued from this office in the course of a year is about 36,034,476. How long would it take the editor to carry them, a quire of 26 copies at a time, to Messrs. Smith and Son's premises, assuming that each journey there and back occupied 23 minutes? Give the answer in years, weeks (not months), days, hours, minutes, seconds, and a fraction of a second, if necessary.

(15.) MIXED VERSE.

I cedrpetae nda rteamicep teh lolfy
Fo vignig dewding serpents lal teh hilwe,
Het lapn sah euaesd a testled lamholeyen
Ot drobo herwe cone herte saw a leapings limes.

Yin refidns, ti messe, rea swalay tegting ramried,
Heirt diewndgs ot my rovingsees wef vige swing,
Ym cavant spure oto goln het dola sih racdier
Fo yubgin rof hetm reptyt, sucsels singth.

(16.) The initials of the words defined below spell the name of a well-known novel, and the finals the pseudonym of the author.
1. The surname of the hero of one of Sir Walter Scott's novels.
2. To obstruct.
3. The foundress of Carthage.
4. Misfortune.
5. A heavy piece of timber.
6. To instruct.
7. A collection of wild beasts.
8. A naval officer.
9. A biblical word meaning "a master."
10. A precious stone carved in relief.
11. A Prince of Denmark.

(17.) The letters of what word on this and the preceding page may be transposed the greatest number of times to form other words, every letter being used in each case? Give the transpositions.
Example: TIMES. Smite, mites, items, etc.

(18.) The first letter of the word forming the solution to this problem is contained in the word "cape" but not in "coat," the second in "wheat" but not in "oat," the remaining letters being disposed of in the following words:
In "pen" but not in "paper."
In "candle" but not in "taper."
In "wink" but not in "nod."
In "plaice" but not in "cod."
In "jam" but not in "honey."
In "cash" but not in "money."
In "drake" but not in "swan."
In "lover" but not in "don."
In "rough" but not in "smooth."
In "salvation" but not in "Booth."
The complete word represents the name of a class of manufacturers whose work is well-known to the readers of our papers. What is the word?

(19.) Those who succeed in making the best anagrams out of the following titles to pieces of music to be found in MELODY will be counted correct:
1. Dear Mother England.
2. March of the Little Tin Soldiers.
3. Awake Sweet Love.
4. Shepherd of Souls.
5. The Hour of Love.

(20.) The word forming the solution to this problem is the name of a county in England. The numbers indicate the relative position of the letters contained in the word.
Example: FORTH. 1, 2, 3, 4, spell "a fortified place."
Problem:
1. 1, 4, 5, 10, spell "finished."
2. 6, 7, 2, 1, spell "a hovel."
3. 7, 8, 9, 10, spell "to borrow."
4. 6, 7, 8, 5, spell "a part of the leg."
5. 1, 4, 3, 2, spell "a bird."
6. 6, 7, 4, 5, 2, spell "did shine."
7. 9, 4, 1, 10, spell "did ride."
8. 9, 10, 5, 1, 2, 9, spell "to inflict."
9. 7, 4, 5, 10, spell "a sharpening stone."
10. 10, 3, 2, 5, spell "level."

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A Dinner Service of 50 pieces is included, which is guaranteed to be worth the guinea alone, and a China Tea Service of 28 pieces, finished in gold, together with a lot of useful kitchen crockery.

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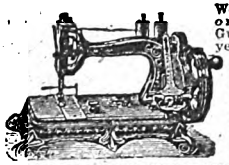

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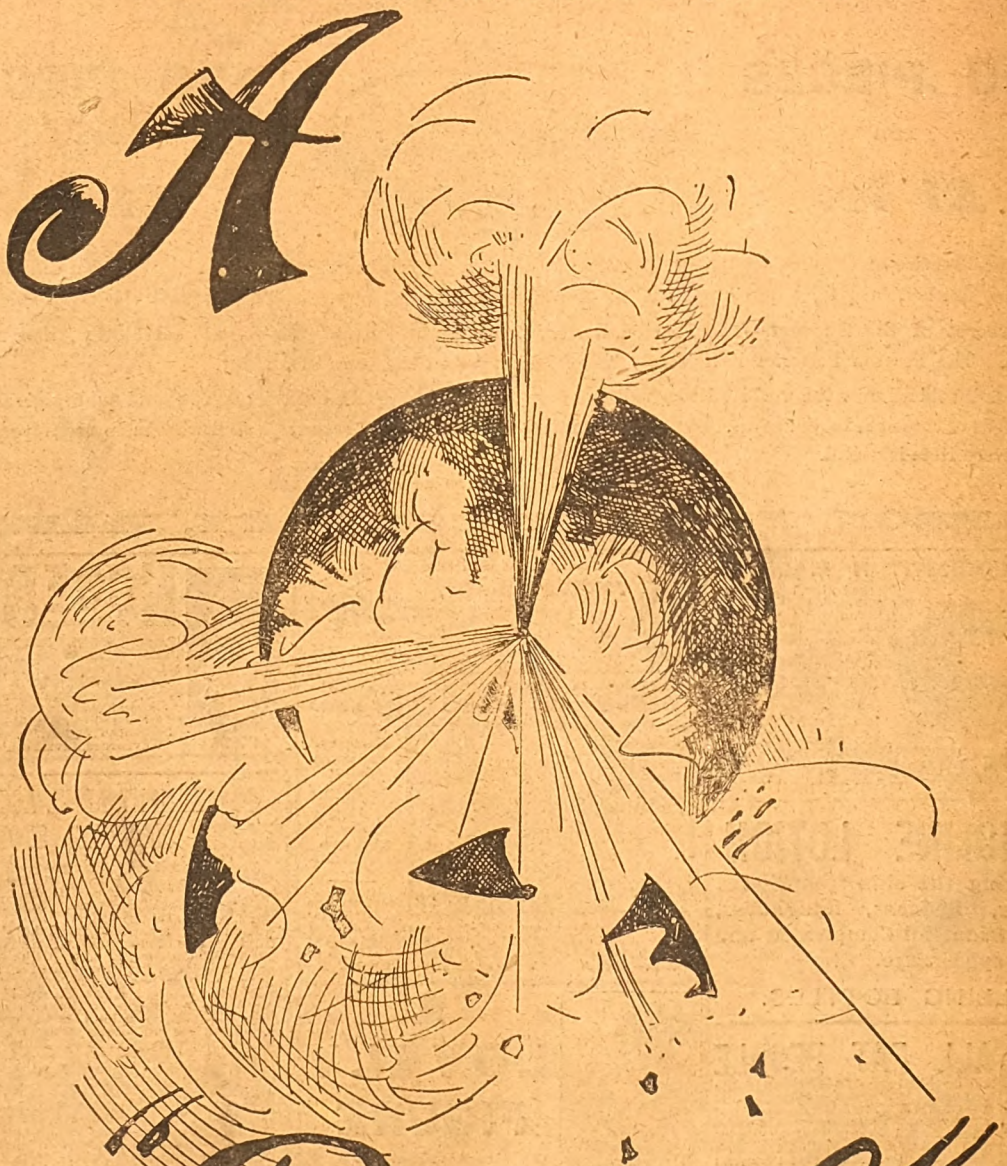

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A POWERFUL NEW SERIAL COMMENCES IN THIS NUMBER.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 386. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 23RD, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

1896 PROCLAMATION.

Grand Pioneer Reduction Sale

By Messrs. F. HODGSON & SON, The Well-known Carpet Manufacturers of the City of Leeds, will take effect on sight of this advertisement.

OUR NEW VENTURE! Yes, Two Different Pattern Hearthrugs or Carpets for the Price of One! (Copyright).

Whereas, in launching forth our New Production, THE "PRUDENTIAL" CARPETS AND HEARTHRUGS, we beg to state they will have a Rich Turkish and Persian Design on one side, and on the reverse he elegant and costly designs of Wilton make. The advantage thus gained is great, as they can be utilised in various rooms at one cost. This is a valuable step in economy.

PRODIGIOUS SALE OF THE

"PRUDENTIAL" Reversible CARPETS

(Registered.)

Reversible, with a different pattern on both sides, woven throughout with handsome border to correspond; richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. Made in 10 sizes only. These carpets are the production of much care, labour, and forethought, and are made in handsome and elaborate patterns (which are protected by registration). They combine the rich blended colours of the Turkish and Persian with the elegant designs of the Wilton. These goods cannot be distinguished from real Brussels when laid down and cannot be excelled in durability.

	Each.		Each
6ft. by 9ft., Reduced Sale Price	4/9	9ft. by 15ft., Reduced Sale Price	12/6
7½ft. by 9ft. " " "	5/11	12ft. by 12ft. " " "	12/9
9ft. by 9ft. " " "	7/6	12ft. by 13½ft. " " "	14/6
9ft. by 10½ft. " " "	8/6	12ft. by 15ft. " " "	15/9
9ft. by 12ft. " " "	9/6	12ft. by 18ft. " " "	19/6
10½ft. by 12ft. " " "	11/6	12ft. by 21ft. " " "	22/6

When ordering please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

"Neal Lodge, Upper Norwood, S.E., January 18th., 1896.
The Dowr. Lady Abercromby is pleased with the 'Prudential' Carpet she ordered."

Blairquhan, Maybole, N.B., August 3rd.
Lady Hunter Blair writes: "Will Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son send her another 'Prudential' Carpet, same as before, crimson and gold, dimensions, 9ft. by 10½ft. Cheque inclosed."

A Reversible "Prudential" Hearthrug (Reg)., to match above Carpets, sent for 1s. 6d. extra, size 2 yards long, and 1 yard wide.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 Hearthrugs for 4s. 3d.; or 6 for 8s.; or 12 for 15s. 6d.

EXTRAORDINARY REDUCTIONS.

100,000 "ALARM" CARPETS

(Registered). **GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.**

Sale Price **2/11** EACH.

This Gigantic Offer is a Special Contract, made with readers of *Short Stories* only. We will forward direct from the looms to any address on receipt of amount, A GENUINE WOVEN, SEAMLESS, REVERSIBLE CARPET, the largest ever sold at the Price.

Suitable for Sitting-room or Bedroom, Bordered and Woven in Art Colours, large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any Middle Profits. Remember these are Woven, not printed, and are made of a material almost equal to Wool. Thousands of these Carpets and Rugs have already been sold at almost double above prices. A Rug sent with Carpet, 10d. extra.

SPECIAL OFFER. 2 Carpets and 2 Rugs ... ... 7s. 3d.

Value unequalled in the Annals of Advertising. As a favour, kindly Examine and Compare these Carpets.

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On receipt of this Coupon and P.O.O. or Stamps for amount, we guarantee to send goods as above to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. Cash returned in full if not satisfied.

(Signed) F. HODGSON & SON.

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Can be obtained for 6d., plus a pound or two of Sugar and a little Yeast.

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FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

Sick Headache, Constipation,
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Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.

ANNUAL SALE SIX MILLION BOXES.

In Boxes, 9½d., 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

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A Farmer's Wife, writes from Mid-Rasen, Lincolnshire: "For a long time I suffered severely from

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And WIND IN THE STOMACH, and had to call in the doctor. Having prescribed for me some time he said, 'I can do nothing more for you.' My husband urged me to try your WIND PILLS; he brought me a box and I took them. In a few days I was quite well and able to get up, and now enjoy excellent health. Publish my name and address."

Page Woodcock's Wind Pills

Being purely Vegetable, Tasteless, Mild, and Tonic, may be taken with perfect safety by the most delicate of either sex.

ALL SUFFERERS from INDIGESTION, LIVER COMPLAINTS, WIND ON THE STOMACH, BILIOUSNESS, SICK HEADACHE, PALPITATION OF THE HEART, etc.,

should avail themselves of this most excellent medicine.

Of all Chemists, at **1s. 1½d.** and **2s. 9d.** Post Free for Price from PAGE WOODCOCK, LINCOLN.

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May 23, 1896.
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We have not a dissatisfied Client.

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DIRECT from the Manufacturer, Saving all Middle Profits.

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In all the present Shades, From **10/6** to **70/-**. Value Unequalled. Fit Guaranteed.

MEN'S SUITS 18/6

Better Qualities, 22/6, 25/6, 31/6, 37/6, 45/-, 52/6, 63/-.

Cycling Suits from 12/6.

BOYS' SUITS.

Pieces for mending sent with all Suits.

See our New Patterns before ordering. *It will pay you to do so.*

Hundreds to choose from. Fashion plates and measure forms free on application. All Goods Carriage Paid.

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Manufacturing and Ladies' Tailors,

117K, ALBION ST., LEEDS.

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Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

No. 386.] For the Week ending May 23rd, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

A Porcelain Cup.

ONE morning as I was strolling through the streets in the neighbourhood of the Opera, I stopped in front of a shop of curiosities and antiquities and ran my eye over the different articles displayed in the window, of which the majority were old acquaintances, and some of which had passed through my own hands.

As I was about to pass on, the door of the shop opened and who should come out but my friend Octave Ducrozel, whom I had not seen for several months. The moment he saw me, he came forward, and I noticed that he seemed annoyed, and his hand trembled in a way that I had never known before.

"What has happened?" I inquired. "You look worried?"

"Oh! those women, those women!" he growled in a voice that seemed addressed to his own reflections rather than to me. "Do not trust their promises, do not place any confidence in their vows! It's enough to make a man blow out his brains!"

"I'll see that you don't do that," I said; "I shall stick to you like your own shadow."

"If you only knew," continued the poor fellow. "And it is only five years ago. I was in love, head over heels in love. I loved with all the passion and intensity of a first love. It was with a beautiful young girl at Batignolles. She was staying with her mother, and in order to remain by her side as long as she lived, she had refused many offers of marriage. Louise Audry was as lovely as she was noble in her devotion to her mother.

"You know how the heart loves to adorn the object of its affections with all the graces and charms imaginable. I was fortunate enough, too, to prove not displeasing to Louise, and before long we had formed the delighful plan of uniting our destinies and getting married. We decided to wait two or three months before taking the final step.

"Unexpected events, however, caused a different disposal of our plans. Compelled to take a long journey, of which the termination seemed doubtful, I found myself obliged to postpone the wedding until my return. When we said good-bye, Louise gave me a faithful promise to wait for me as long as events might make it necessary.

"As a token of my tender affection I begged her acceptance of an extremely beautiful porcelain goblet that had been left to me by my grandmother, and which I cherished as the apple of my eye. Louise was delighted to possess an article that would constantly remind her of me, and promised that whatever might happen she would not suffer it to leave her possession.

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"Those were her last words. Shortly after they fell from her beautiful red lips I started on my journey.

"Four years passed, as you know, before I returned to France. During that time I was in the centre of Africa, conducting explorations, and practically exiled from the world, receiving no news and able to send none.

"As soon as I arrived in Paris I hurried to see Louise, to whom I had telegraphed from Marseilles. Alas! what a cruel deception was in store for me!

"The house she used to live in had been torn down and removed by the construction of a new street. No one knew where Madame Audry and her daughter had gone to live, and all my efforts to trace them were ineffectual and vain.

"Several months have gone by since then without bringing any news to change the unhappy state of affairs.

"This morning, while looking through the shops to find a birthday present for my sister I went by chance into the shop where you have just met me.

"While searching about for something that would make a present a little out of the ordinary run I walked up and down the shop in front of the show cases and let no corner escape my attention. In this way I found myself at length in front of a tall case with closed glass windows, beside which a young girl was sitting with some embroidery work in her hands.

"And in this glass case, just about the height of my eyes, what should I see standing on a shelf behind the shining glass pane but the old porcelain goblet that I had given to Louise. Yes, the very same it was! The exquisite piece of Sèvres that had such deep significance for me and with which so many tender memories and associations were linked.

"At first I was inclined to doubt my eyes, but on looking closer it was no longer possible, for I knew every detail of it by heart, and I recognised them all beyond the possibility of being mistaken.

"There was a wreath of flowers so finely and delicately worked in with threads of gold and silver, forming a crown work in which alternated harmoniously a superb rose cluster, with leaves and buds and a bunch of dainty little flowers, red and blue! I could not mistake it. There, too, was the artistic mounting that I knew so well, with the three bronze supports representing the heads of animals peering forth out of dense foliage, and chiselled by the hand of a master.

"My surprise speedily gave place to indignation, as you may well understand. This treasure of my heart in a shop! This gem linked with so many family traditions and representing the faithfulness of my first love, exposed to the public eye of the chance and ordinary buyer.

"In spite of her solemn oath she had sold the goblet—and forgotten me who gave it her. Oh! woman, woman, woman, all and always the same, you are the personification of inconstancy and the lie!

"Naturally, you will understand, I had only one thought in my mind—to buy the goblet back again. I asked the price.

"'Ah! Monsieur,' answered the clerk, 'the precious objects in that case are in special care of Madame Burnard, the proprietress, and she alone attends to any business connected with them. Madame Burnard has just gone out, and I can't say nothing about them. Perhaps mademoiselle has some instructions.'

"'No,' answered the young girl thus addressed, putting down her embroidery and raising her eyes to me. 'Mother takes charge of all in the case, monsieur, and I have not even the key. My mother will return at six o'clock and monsieur will, perhaps, look in again to-night.'

"I said that I would do so and left the shop."

"*Eh, bien!* My dear Octave," I said, interrupting my friend in his tale, "we will both go there together, for I do not mean to leave your side until this matter is cleared up."

"Cleared up!" he exclaimed impatiently; "there's no clearing up about it. The solution is evident and obvious. I am forgotten and my token has been thrown away and sold."

Poor Octave! His heart was full of bitterness. Apparently disappointed and deceived in his first love, he was ready to curse the whole sex and to class them one and all as false, faithless, and cruel.

At six o'clock we returned to the shop. Octave entered alone and I walked up and down outside waiting for him and looking in at the shop window. I had to wait a long time, nearly an hour. Evidently the interview was not hurrying on with winged feet.

At length my friend came, his face radiant.

"Well," I cried, "have you got your goblet?"

"Yes, no; that is to say, I have it and I haven't it! Ah! my friend. I hardly know what I am saying, I am so upset, so happy! Ah! do you know that women are angels? Don't you understand me?"

"I must confess that—er——"

"Well, I'll tell you all about it. The moment I entered the shop the little girl with the embroidery met me and said her mother had just come in.

"I followed her to the farther end of the shop, where, in the semi-darkness I saw a woman coming to meet me.

"'Madame,' I said, 'there is in your show-case an article that I feel disposed to purchase.'

"'Yes, monsieur, I know,' she answered quickly. 'You refer to the old porcelain goblet. I regret it exceedingly, monsieur, but it is not for sale. It is only here to be kept for the one person who has the right to reclaim it and to whom it belongs.'

"'And how do you know, madam, that I am not the person?'

"At this moment the clerk lit the gas and we found ourselves suddenly face to face in the strong light.

"'Louise!'

"'Octave!'

"This unexpected meeting naturally caused long explanations. These Louise gave me frankly and freely. When their house was pulled down Madame Audry and her daughter left Batignolles to live in Paris. A short time after there was a financial catastrophe which made a great stir and ruined many people, among them Madame Audry. The old woman shortly afterwards died of grief and disappointment.

"Without news of me and in a condition of hopelessness and despair Louise found herself at the end of her strength and resources, when an old friend of her mother, a M. Burnard, who kept a curiosity shop, turned up to help her. He was a widower, over sixty years of age, and with a young daughter on his hands he found himself rapidly going into a decline.

"Anxious to find some one who would be a friend to the girl after his death, and knowing the kind heart of Louise, he offered her his name, his house and his home.

"That is how Louise became Madame Burnard and was called mother without being a mother; how the goblet always remained in her possession, and how I have the pleasure now to announce our approaching marriage, at which I trust you will do me the honour to be best man."

Honor Lucelle.

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IN * THE * DARK.

The darkness was intense, and it had a singularly depressing effect on me as I groped along, stealthily following the rustling sound of a woman's dress. In the pursuit, I had climbed many stone stairways, and at last I found myself walking on a narrow ledge, scarcely wide enough to afford a safe footing. With my cane I reached over the ledge, but not far, as I could touch nothing, and a feeling of dread came over me lest I should lose my balance. To my left was the wall, which arched so low as to compel me to stoop in walking.

The associations surrounding the uncanny place added to the horror of my situation. The building was in a deserted quarter of the city of Mexico. The massive pile had for many years been abandoned by all reputable persons and pursuits. Its labyrinthine interior was a safe refuge for a horde of murderous marauders. Many a brave officer of the law, while searching for a criminal, had been stabbed to death by a hand suddenly thrust from one of the dark recesses.

Only the week before, a prominent and respected citizen had been murdered within these dread precincts. His beautiful daughter, Dolores, had formed an attachment for a handsome and dashing young fellow, named Manuel Lopez. He was the leader of a band of free-booters who made their headquarters in the building.

The father took some determined steps and thought he had broken up the affair; but one day a rumour reached him that Dolores often met her lover in that retreat.

One night he followed her, and, to his intense grief, found that the rumour was true. He awaited the meeting, and then rushed at Lopez with the fury of a tiger. The next instant the father fell with a fatal knife-thrust in his heart. The funeral took place amid general lamentations, and a large reward was offered for the apprehension of the murderer.

A number of mounted officers scoured the neighbouring country; but from the first I was convinced that Lopez had not left his den. From what I could learn of the girl, I was also certain that she had not even yet entirely deserted her lover.

My watch of seven days and nights was now rewarded by the reappearance of the girl in the building, and, notwithstanding my fears, I cautiously followed the rustling sound of the dress in the darkness before me.

By an occasional glimmer, it was evident that the girl had a faint light to guide her steps. Fortunately she moved slowly, and I was enabled to follow closely by carefully feeling my way with my cane and outstretched hand.

Suddenly I was checked in my pursuit by a startling incident. The girl stopped, the glimmering light entirely disappeared, and I heard a voice, low, but vehement with rapturous delight:

"Dolores, my darling! I knew you would come to me, that your love would show you that I was not to blame. And it was not my fault, I swear to you. He sprang at me like a wild beast, and not knowing what I did, I drew my knife in self-defence—and killed him. I acted on the swift impulse of the moment, and surely you cannot blame me."

"I do not blame you," the girl said slowly and with infinite sadness in her tones; "but we must part for ever. I came to-night to bid you a last farewell."

"Ah, do not say that, Dolores!" came the man's voice, in desperate pleading; "see, I could not act otherwise. For your sake, I would never have harmed him—yes, I could even have fought for him; but he came upon me like the wind, he gave me no time for thought—I knew only that one of us must die. Consider, how would it have been had he lived, had he killed me? Could you have been his child again? No; you had chosen me and I but served your love when I preserved my life. Think, dear one, you were mine by Fate's decree, and are you the less mine that I have taken the only course against a man who would have killed me?"

"It cannot be, it cannot be, Manuel," moaned the girl hopelessly; "my father's blood is upon your head, and we must part for ever."

"Come, come, Dolores, be not too hasty. You must take time to think. Come, let me lead you to a seat. Why do you draw back from me? I know every foot of the way here, and can find my way as easily in the dark as in the light. Besides, would it be so great a harm if we should fall over this ledge—we, whose love is greater than love of life itself? It is many feet to the stone floor of the court below, and I have heard it said that before falling half the distance, one's breath is taken away and death comes as peacefully as sleep to a babe. Come, Dolores, come!"

There was a sound as if the girl were being half led, half dragged over the stones. She uttered an entreating moan which thrilled me through and through with horror. Little wonder that she was frightened and unwilling to follow her lover; his pleading earnestness had changed to a desperate, despairing tone. I felt that he was about to commit some other dreadful deed, but I was powerless to interfere. The ledge along which I had been feeling my way ended abruptly, and my cane failed to touch a further footing in any direction.

Suddenly the noise of dragging, intermingled with moans from the girl, ceased, and the next instant from *below* I heard a terrible shriek, followed by sounds as if falling objects were striking against projections in a rapid descent. Then all was still again.

I peered into the darkness for a moment till I heard a murmur of voices. At last a lantern was brought. It revealed a group of horror-stricken men gathered round two prostrate forms which lay on the stone floor far below. They were the mangled bodies of Manuel Lopez and Dolores, fallen upon almost the same stone where the father had poured out his life's blood a few nights before.

Clara Megandel.

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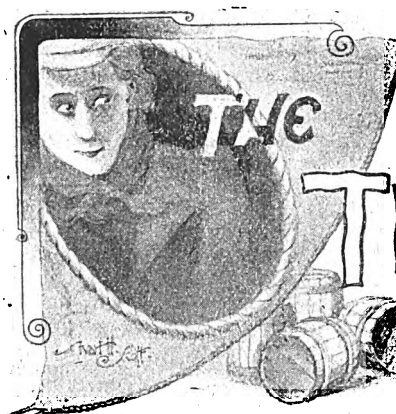

THE TRAGEDY of the "MERRYLEGS"

I HOLD it ain't right for a woman to make eyes at a man when he's scarce half her age—not that I want to draw a line at when I consider a woman has no business to be thinking about making love; that's not my meaning.

But when the chap's eighteen, and soft as butter and the girl's thirty-five, and hard as nails, it don't seem to be the square thing.

This business grew out of nothing, right under my nose, and I never see it till all the fat's afire. Here am I, skipper of the *Merrylegs*, as tidy a craft as ever nosed her way through the "Swatch." And there, living in Rochester, is my Lucy and her mother. Then here, aboard with me, is my mate, Jacob Faithful—so named after that chap of Marryat's, for want of a better, by them as found him when a kid bellowing on the workhouse steps.

It's the voyage after I'm married. Lucy is sailing with me for the first time. I don't know about anything else.

So the morning we're ready for sea I go up to the office for orders.

The Guv'nor thinks he will walk down to the wharf to see me off. He knows a thing or two, for his age, does the Guv'nor.

It's about half-past ten and high water when we reach the wharf. The *Merrylegs* is lying off in the stream all ready for up and away when we sighted her as we come out of the street.

"Hallo, Merton!" says the Guv'nor, "who have you got aboard?"

"Lumme!" says I, "I know the Missis is there, but that ain't her." Lawd! you might have knocked me down with a corn plaster, for just as I spoke Lucy comes up the kebbin steps and waves her hand to me, and the other one turns about and waves hers, too.

"Sir," says I—for I'm bound to give him an answer—"it's her mother; she's coming round to Dover to show Lucy the ropes."

"All right!" says the Guv'nor sharp like. "Get on board and look slippery while there's a slant!" So I row on board in a kind of fluster, wondering where in thunder we're going to stow the old lady in a bawge that's only got one kebbin.

However, as it's Lucy's mother, I suppose I've got to put a good face on it. But I says to myself as I row off:

"Tom, that old lady's your mother-in-law. If you don't fix her off she'll be sailing with Lucy to teach her the ropes more days than you care about. Tom," I says, "you don't want Lucy to know the ropes. She's very well as she is. Besides, there ain't any teaching as you can't teach." So I pull alongside, make the boat fast, and jump on board. I've made up my mind to do the polite thing by the old lady.

"Good-morning, Mother!" says I, goin' up to her, "glad to see you."

Then she turns round, and I see it's not Lucy's mother at all, but a party I don't know no more than Adam.

"Missis!" says I, gulping down my feelings—which was for cussing—"and what may you want with the *Merrylegs?*"

"I think you are very rude!" she answers pert as you like; "ask that gentleman."

That gentleman's the mate, and he's blundering acrost the hatches in big sea boots and guernsey, looking as sick as a stuck sheep.

"It's all right, Skipper," he says, "she's a friend of mine; I've promised her a sea trip to Dover."

"Faithful!" says I, "is it a widder? 'cos if so bring her up wiv a round turn!"

"Skipper!" says he, "I——" then he stopped short as a run down clock and she takes up the running.

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"Captain," she says, smiling at me for all she's worth.

"Don't be angry with Jacob—I am very sorry if I am incommoding you, but Jacob and I are old friends; you'll let me go, won't you?"

"You've got to go," says I, "for we'll be under weigh in ten minutes."

As I look at her, and then at Faithful, standing there so sheepish, I remember that yarn about him being nobody's kid in particular, and the workhouse steps, so I says to myself: "Tom, you're treadin' on somebody's corns more nor a trifle. Up mud hook and away!"

So I turn to the mate: "Heave short, my son!" says I, "and trundle that main sheet aft as you go along."

Then I turn to my lady, and I says: "Missis, I've got to take you willy-nilly. There's my guv'nor standing on the wharf. I'm late now. It's more than my berth's worth to stop and put you ashore, even if that was your wish."

"Oh, well!" she says, "I hope you've got something to eat; it's hungry work at sea, I hear."

"As for that," I answered, "there's a brace of pheasants, anyway."

"Pheasants?" says she. "Now that will be a treat. Where do you keep them?"

"They are hanging over your head, Missis," I says, as I'm hauling aft the main sheet. "Cawn't you smell 'em?"

"Them!" she says, looking up.

"Aye, Missis, that's my meaning! Anchor away there, Faithful!"

"I call 'em bloaters!" she sniffs out disdainful, getting up and going to the kebbin scuttle.

"It's all right, Skipper."

"A trifle of difference in names, Missis," says I. "Up fores'l; look slippery, my son!"

With that, Lucy, who has been standing in the waist, watching, comes aft to me, and tucking her arm through mine as I stand at the wheel, looks up and says:

"Tom, what's the matter with Faithful?"

"Faithful, lass?" I asks; "why, what's adrift?"

"He's queer, Tom; he does nothing but heave sighs."

"Heave crab-winches he may, lass," says I, "or the windlass for that matter; but sighs—lumme! who ever tell of 'em? Maybe it's a pint of four 'alf he's thinking of."

"Captain, may I come down?"

"Na—a—a!" says Lucy, smiling and dodging away from me, "it's something softer than that."

By this time the mains'l is drawing, so the mate slips the bowline, kicks the foresheet down to leeward, and comes aft.

"Take hold here, Faithful," says I, "and keep your eyes lifting; I'm going below."

When I get into the kebbin Lucy's getting ready a bit of grub.

"When did that party come aboard, lass?" I asked.

"I don't know, Tom. The mate says she's his girl."

"That's as maybe, lass," says I, as I climb on the lockers to take a squint out of the skylight, for I'd heard a sound of giggling. "Anyway he's hugging her pretty close now, lumme! I must go on deck, else we'll be head first into something along of his foolin'."

Whether they heard me speaking or what I don't know, but just as I'm going up the kebbin steps, my lady comes tripping along lively as you like, and smiling down at me, says: "Captain, may I come down? I should like one of those pheasants you were speaking about."

"Pheasants is off!" says I, short like, for I had a notion she was fooling me, "but you may come down if you like an' have a bit of what's going."

So down she comes, as daintily as you wish, showing just a glimpse of as pretty a foot and ankle as you—well, there. There's no two ways about it, she was all a toff, although what's coming may give that statement the lie.

"Captain," she says, smiling very prettily at the pair of us, "I'm so sorry to be in the way. I had no notion you were just married—newly-wed couples ought to be left in peace." With that she sighs as though her heart would break.

"As for that," says I, savage like, and looking at Lucy's face going crimson, "we'd as lief have been without you."

"Oh, you dear, outspoken man," she says, smiling for all she's worth; "I do love to hear one speak one's mind without any beating about the bush. Now I suppose you want to know what brought me here?"

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"It's a matter as wants a trifle of clearin', Missis," says I.

"Well," she goes on quite amiable, "I live at Dover, but I've been staying in London. Yesterday I came down to Rochester to do some sketching, and had all my money stolen whilst I sat in the Castle grounds. I had not a farthing left. I was in terrible distress and

"Lucy, lass!" I whisper, "look here."

wandered about hopelessly searching everywhere for my bag."

"You might have gone to the police, Missis," says I, "they'd have telegraft for you."

"Captain," she says, shuddering same as if she'd seen a rat, "I did think of it—I tried to do it, but I couldn't. Men look with suspicion on ladies in such predicaments as I was in."

"There's something in that," says I.

"So I was out all night, Captain, all the weary, cold, dark night."

"Which was warm enough, Missis," says I.

"Aye!" she answers wistful, "for you—for you and your sweet wife—but for me—oh! it was awful!"

"Well cheer up now, anyway," says I. "We'll put you ashore at Dover."

She was silent a while, then went on.

"But the curious part of it is, that when I met the mate, he reminded me most forcibly of a dear friend of mine at Dover. He told me something of his sad history, and wonderful as it may seem, I believe I shall be able to find his mother for him. Her little boy was stolen when he was but a few weeks old. The nurse disappeared at the same time."

"Faithful seems to have fell on his feet all round the shop" says I. Then, as breakfast was ready, we fell to, and for a toff, I think that party took the cake. She got outside of more grub than me and Lucy put together; which was laying it on pretty thick, seeing she's only a lodger.

There's a light westerly breeze all down the Medway, and I stay at the wheel till we get off the "Spaniard." Then I go below. It's four o'clock when I come on deck again.

I step up the ladder and take a look. The mate's at the wheel and my lady's standing beside him looking into his face with that queer smile of hers.

"Lucy, lass!" I whisper, "look here."

"'Tain't fair, Tom," says she, squeezing up beside me, and gripping hold of my arm. "She's foolin' him!"

"Think so, lass?"

"Sure, Tom; she's not for the likes of him!"

With that I slip on deck, and get a glimpse of the gossoon's face before he sees me. He's staring at her like a screech owl blinking at the daylight, and there's a flag flying on the mizzen-truck.

"Have done this foolin', Faithful!" says I; "what's the flag up for?"

"Oh, I asked him to hoist it," says my lady, "I think it makes the ship look quite gay."

"This ship's a bawge, Missis," I says, "and don't need to look gay. Haul it down, mate!"

I take the wheel at this, and we go sailing down the coast over a sea that's dancing in the sunlight astern like a sheet of glawse.

There's a lot of yachts about with their pretty white sails and tapering spars, looking for all the world like the butterflies they are.

One of 'em, a smart cutter of about forty tons, came cruising past us as though she's a steamboat. My lady, who's sitting on the hatches forward of me, pulls out her handkerchief and waves it to the chaps on board.

"What's that for, Missis?" I asks, for she seems to me to be bossing the whole show.

"Captain!" she laughs, "why not? Who could help wishing them luck?"

"If that's all—there's an end!" says I, "and no harm done."

After that we crept on quietly till about five o'clock, when as we are making no head against the tide, we drop the kellick (anchor) about a couple of miles this side of Mawgit Hook.

When night comes on, I'm for fixing up a spare lodging in the kebbin for my lady, but she won't hear of it. She'll stay on deck wrapped in her rug. Well, I don't like to press the point, so it's as she says.

It draws on to about nine o'clock, and as fine a night as ever the stars blinked down upon. There's no moon yet, and I'm sitting dozing over my pipe on the kebbin lockers, when I see a kind of sickly glare stealing down the skylight. It's not fire. I know that. It's some thundering mystification having to do with my lady.

I crawl up the ladder quiet as you like. The whole decks, rigging, spars, and everything are standing out in a blaze of sickly shimmering light. Only for a second though. Then there's a hiss, and all is as dark as you like.

Out on deck I go, savage at being too late.

"What's up there, Missis!" I yells; "who are you wishing good-bye to now?"

"Me!" cries my lady. "Why, Captain, how you frighten one; I was fast asleep!"

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'Didn't see no blue lights, I suppose?"

"Blue lights? what's that?" she questions, simple as a child.

"You saw a blue light!" says I, turning and running for'ard to Faithful, who's lying down in the folds of the fores'l.

"Na-a-a," says he, "I were asleep, Skipper."

This set me adrift. I know I'm half asleep myself and may have been mistaken. So after a while I get aft again and down into the kebbin.

I'm terrible wakeful all the rest of the night. At times I doze on the lockers—for I never turned in—and dream of blue lights, blue women, blue devils. At last, towards two o'clock, I wake with a start and spring up quickly with the feeling of something ghostly creeping past me. But there's nothing there only the kebbin and the darkness. But across my ears comes a sound that isn't born of the night. It's a sort of rasping noise I don't understand. Rousing Lucy, an' telling her to dress quickly, I'm up the ladder like a shot, blaring out into the darkness like a fool. Presently I make out a shadowy outline of sails stealing quietly past. I look for'ard—there's three lights on our bow-board.

"Faithful!" I shouts, "is it Bank Holiday and midnight illuminations of the Gawdings, or what's up?"

But there's no answer, only the scuttling of chaps getting into a boat in a hurry.

"Lumme!" says I, "if this here bawge ain't gone mad, chalk me up for a fool."

Then I got for'ard as quick as may be. As I go along there's a splashing of oars alongside, and a boat rows away into the night. I see no more, for a blinding flash leaps out of the darkness, and I fall to the deck like a dead man.

But I'm not hit, I'm only stunned by coming down against the fore-hatch. It's Faithful that's hit, and lies like a heap of old clothes acrost the hatch combings.

* * * * *

It's an hour from then to when I come too. Then I pick myself up and see Lucy bending over me with a face as white as the dead. Faithful is still acrost the hatches, and the dawn's creeping up over Mawgit sands astern. Away out there in the blink of the sun, a yacht is stealing quietly away, pretty near hull down. And here on the deck is a group of coastguards standing watching us all.

"Feel better, skipper?" says the officer. "What's been adrift?"

"Lumme!" says I, "it's all adrift, along of them petticoats. Ask Faithful, maybe he knows."

But Faithful don't know anything for some while yet. The chaps are busy patching up the wound he got—it's not much, but it bleeds fast and has to be stopped.

On the deck is a group of coastguards.

"Captain!" says Faithful presently, speaking weak as a licked dawg, "better look what's in them casks."

"What casks?" says I, then I turn and see two lying on the deck beside the windlass, and that some of the hatches is off.

"Cement's in them, mate; what are they got up for?"

"They've taken away two; you came up and stopped the rest."

"Taken away two?" says I; "Faithful, that's more than your week 'll come to!"

"Skipper!" says he, "it's like this. We're loading at the wharf, and the day before we sail, that female party that's just cleared out came down to the bawge and persuaded me to let her stow four casks aboard, fore side the cargo. I see no harm in this—she's wanting to go to Dover Well, I let her. She made a point of finding mother at Dover for me. She's a swell, and she knows her quite well. Skipper! it was that as done it, that, and the twinkle of her bright eyes. Then comes the night we're sailing. Down to the wharf she comes and diddles me out of the way whiles her chums slip on board. It's too late to make a song about it, and I think they're just wanting a trip to Dover, too, and say nothing.

"To-night I was for calling you when I see that yacht coming down and her burning blue lights. But she puts her arms round my neck, and they's so soft, skipper—and the blather of her finishes it."

"Roll those casks here," says the coastguard officer. "Knock their heads in!"

"It's broaching cargo," says I.

"Fiddlesticks!" says he.

In a few minutes they are opened and the stuffs pouring out on deck.

"Cement!" says I.

"Turn 'em out!" says he.

"Cement—cement," says I. "Bloody cement!" says he, and then—a foot—an arm—a leg—head, trunk and all came trundling across the deck smothered in cement dust.

"That cawsk was for overboard!" says Faithful; "they were at it when you come!"

Then we capsized the other, and it's silver—plate they called it—and jewels—some in boxes, some stowed in paper—enough to stock a shop!

"Lumme!" says I, "if this ain't a start, chalk me up a fool!"

And a start it is before we've done with it, what with chasing that yacht and losing her, and inquests, and trials, and judges, we get it laid on pretty thick. For there's been a burglary at a big house back of Rochester, and murder thrown in. It's all in the papers whiles we are at Dover. And this chap as they were going to cremate was the butler that tried to save his master's property and got fixed up like jugged hare by that pawty as came their game on Faithful.

EDWARD NOBLE.

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A SAINT.

SHE walked her daily path with the calm eyes of a Madonna. "Mrs. Chetwynd," the old permanent gossips would say to the new, temporary, or come-to-stay gossips. "Why, don't you know? The English Consul's wife. Oh, she is a saint. No one ever says a word against her." The last clause was invariably spoken in a way to give the impression that possibly other "hers," might have words said against them. And this, of course, was true. That little tropical mountain capital 5,000 feet up from the rank and steaming vegetation of the coasts on either side, held an English-American colony whose chief pastime was the destroyal, attempted or effectual, of reputations. Everyone professed to have his or her favourites and intimate friends; there were several cliques, according to superstitious or self-asserted social position, and each clique hated all the others.

Of course, there was a little English chapel in the town; the Spanish Catholic tolerance smiled upon it. And in this chapel, Sunday after Sunday, the English speaking colony was wont to meet, kneel, rehearse the Litany, and listen to a sermon read—usually—by the English Consul. Sylvia Chetwynd, the English Consul's wife, was in her pew sabbath after sabbath, with a face of faultless regularity of feature, and Greville Chetwynd, her husband, led the service as best a layman might. Greville was half-way popular. His Sunday face was just a little different from his weekday face. On week-days he bought and sold coffee and did an exchange business, with rasping and grasping care to have the latest one half per cent. rise on the right side, generally his own. On Sundays he was affected and mincing, some people said. A traveller for a Scotch firm of whiskey exporters dared to wonder aloud one morning in the Hotel Cantina, how Mrs. Chetwynd had come to fancy such a man. And a great silence fell on the idle crowd and shut him off. "Oh, she's a saint. No one can say anything about her," was the verdict.

Lorrimer Dewitt therefore held his peace. He was a sober fellow, tasting as little as possible the wares of the house he represented. He travelled a good deal with various other lines of goods, and he had found that nothing paid him so well as that which went to allay the beautiful—and universal—thirst in the land. Therefore he continued in this line. Not remaining in one spot very long, he could well afford to remain neutral and friendly to all the various cliques, not uniting his interests with any in particular.

Of course he had to cut some figure in the English speaking colony, however, and of course he would naturally meet now and then, the English Consul's wife. He rarely went to the consulate, but Mrs. Chetwynd went about a good deal. She had the excellent custom of visiting the orphan asylums, of carrying books and papers to the hospitals, of gracing with her presence various charity entertainments, such as concerts and fairs, provided they did not occur on Sunday. She was indeed a saint.

Lorrimer Dewitt admired her cold, calm beauty, the purity of her oval face, the large angelic blue eyes.

And yet she impressed him curiously. Was it merely the coldness, he caught himself wondering. Sometimes he fancied he had seen such a face before. But where? The idea was too vague. She was always courteously amiable to him—nothing more. She seemed ever to insist upon a certain distance between herself and others—especially men.

Of this, of course, he approved. A woman cannot be too careful. There was that little Mrs. Maclean, the civil engineer's wife—always in trouble, always doing things—always causing talk! Lorrimer liked Mrs. Maclean, in an honest, straightforward way, and thought it a pity that her husband was such a peculiar tempered, uncertain sort of fellow. Yet he couldn't deny that Mrs. Maclean often did imprudent things.

Dewitt had begun to think of leaving for the north. It was a soft-skied, cloudy day in June, early in the rainy season. His sales had been good, and he had a fancy to go back home.

Bob Maclean had spoken of going. Dewitt was not over anxious for his company, yet, since no one else was likely to sail, thought he would find out if it were true. One evening he strolled over to the little house opposite the Cathedral Plaza, where the Macleans had apartments. It was a two-story house, a doctor had the ground floor, and a staircase led from the patio, full of glorious jessamine and yellow roses. On the staircase, almost at the top, Lorrimer Dewitt paused, hesitating and in trepidation. Sobs—surely a woman's sobs. If poor little Mrs. Maclean were unhappy he must not commit the indiscretion of an intrusion. But, on the other hand, how to withdraw without being heard? Irresolute he halted there. Then some one came out of a room on the long landing above. Dewitt coughed, and was relieved to hear the voice of Bob Maclean:

"That you, Mr. Dewitt? Come along up. Glad to see you. I'm all alone."

Dewitt grasped at the fiction with satisfaction.

"Yes, I thought you were alone. I believe I saw Mrs. Maclean with—with Mrs. Chetwynd over on the other side of the square."

Maclean looked at him with a blank sort of pallor or a pallid sort of blankness.

"With Mrs. Chetwynd? No. I hardly think so." He tried to laugh. "They are not very good friends."

"No?" said Dewitt carelessly. Then he changed the subject. "Have you decided about going home yet?"

"Yes, I'm going."

"Will Mrs. Maclean accompany you?"

"No; I believe she will stay here. You see I'm making a sort of flying trip. Coming back."

"You'll go down to the port by the Friday train, no doubt?"

"Yes, not sooner. It's a nuisance waiting over even one day in the coast heat. I don't see why the trains can't connect better."

There was an uneasy silence for a few seconds. Then Dewitt rose.

"I won't stay longer since we are to be voyage

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companions. I'm rather busy, making up accounts. Please give my respectful regards to your wife. I'll see you to-morrow, of course. Anyway, Friday. Good-night."

Dewitt returned to his hotel, wondering what Maclean's poor little wife's latest trouble had arisen from. He did not go to bed at once, but sat in the narrow covered balcony smoking. It was Wednesday night. Three nights more and he would be at sea—he and Bob Maclean. Susie Maclean would be alone, and probably ears deep in her 999th indiscretion. She was a good little woman, thoroughly pure-minded, he knew in his heart, but she would do wild things. The mountain atmosphere seemed constantly to have gone to her head.

He sat smoking there until after midnight. Finally he ceased to smoke, and sat half inclined to doze in the warmth of the night, which seemed to lave him like a warm, perfumed bath. In the shadow of a post he sat motionless and unobserved. Two figures passed below, slowly, quietly. The streets were deserted and noiseless. He could hear the words of the couple—a man and a woman.

"Yes, of course—but I must go. There is no help."

"You will not take her?" The woman spoke between her teeth in a curious mandatory tone.

"No, I have told you."

And they passed on.

The voice of the man was Bob Maclean. But whose voice was the woman's?

An hour later, retiring into his mosquito canopy, Lorrimer Dewitt was still uneasy over the question.

He had heard no voice like that save one—pshaw! Absurd. The voice of the wife of the English Consul!

"A saint, they call her!" He dozed off to sleep.

The next day he forgot about the Macleans until evening. Then he chanced to pass their house. The little woman was at the street door. She looked sad and heavy-eyed.

"You will be lonely," he said, moved by some sudden impulse. "Why don't you make your husband bring you along?"

"Oh, he doesn't want me," she answered, forcing a laugh.

Dewitt did not linger; he knew too well the gossip that might result.

He was at his hotel and in bed early that night, having arranged to be called at six the next morning for the early train to the port.

About midnight a commotion in the house aroused him. He got up hastily and partly dressed, fearful of fire or earthquake. Then he went out in the upper corridor and there met someone.

"What's the matter?"

"They sent to awaken Dr. Adair, Dr. Garcia was away."

"Some one ill?"

"Why, it was at Mr. Maclean's. It seems there was an accident with his pistol, and he is shot—dying, they think."

Dewitt went back to his room. He trembled with a nervous chill as he hastily put on his clothes—not omitting an overcoat.

Within ten minutes he had crossed the plaza. The house was alive with people. And Maclean was dead.

From the man-servant Dewitt managed to obtain a few coherent particulars. Maclean had shot himself while cleaning his revolver preparatory to packing it in his bag. He had been getting ready for the early morning start. There was a letter for Mr. Dewitt. The servant thought it was something about the luggage. It was sealed and addressed, and Mr. Maclean had spoken of wanting it sent round very early.

"Get me the letter," said Dewitt hoarsely. He was trembling violently now.

The servant returned and put it in his hand. Dewitt left the house, returned to his hotel, and there in his room, with his door locked, broke the seal.

It was brief.

"You are an honest man and a gentleman. Be a friend to poor Susie. Life is become unendurable for me. Susie is blameless, but she is not legally my wife. The woman who once bore that name is still alive, and is here in this place. No one suspects her. She deserted me. I thought her dead, and married Susie. I never thought to meet the first one here. The world is round and small—too small. She holds a threatening hand over me, and I am desperate. I simply cut it all. She is cold, cruel, fascinating, wicked. I have been wild about her. I might be so again—her power is great. Poor Susie! I spare her. I am wild and sick of life. I trust you."

Lorrimer Dewitt sealed up the letter, and put it carefully away among his things.

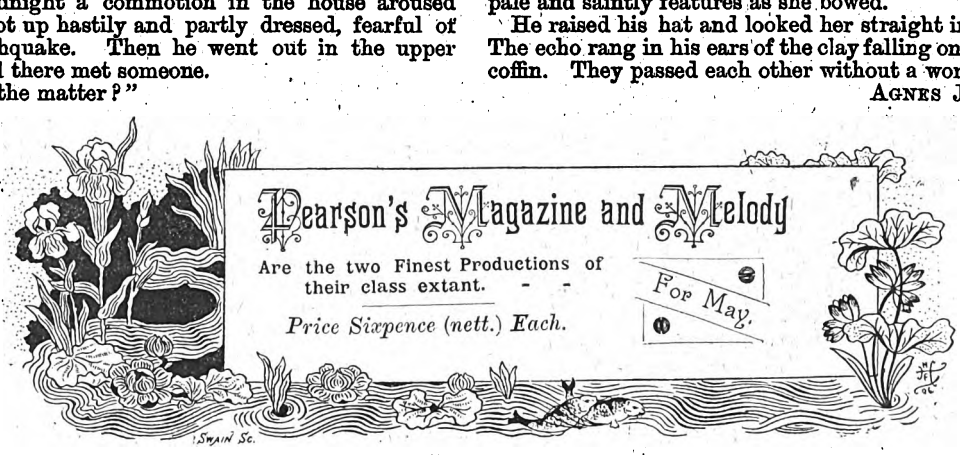
He did not take the early train. He remained to try and look after his dead friend's widow.

The funeral took place that afternoon, with necessary tropical haste. Only men—according to the country's custom—accompanied the remains to the grave.

Returning from the cemetery, he met the wife of the English Consul going to the hospital, her arms full of books and flowers. A courteous smile came over her pale and saintly features as she bowed.

He raised his hat and looked her straight in the eyes The echo rang in his ears of the clay falling on Maclean's coffin. They passed each other without a word.

AGNES JEWLEY



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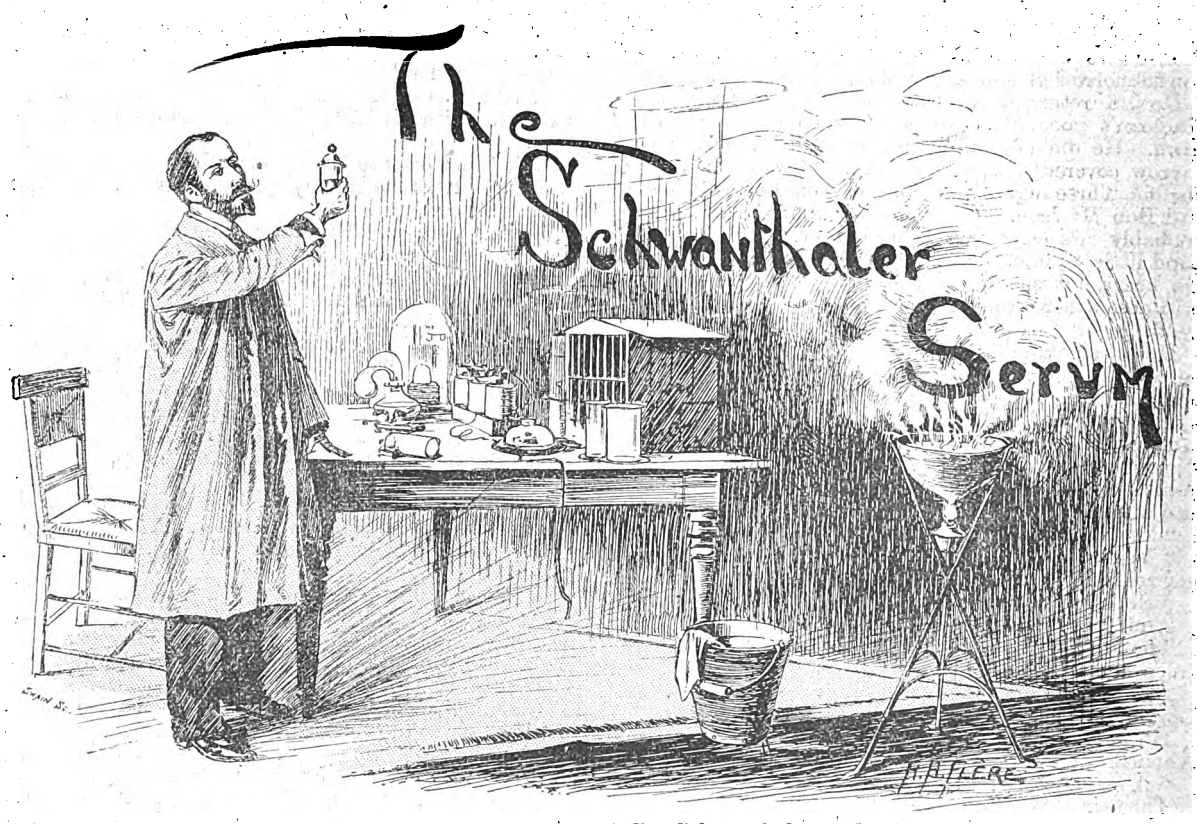
The Schwanthaler Serum



For at least a week Dr. Cornelius Schwanthaler had been in a state of great excitement; which, in the circumstances, was not at all surprising. Fired by the discovery of the "X" rays, and animated by the desire to do something which should make his name known to the same extent as that of Professor Röntgen, he had set to work to discover some method of giving the eye the power of seeing through opaque bodies without the use of cumbersome apparatus; and he had succeeded in producing a serum—which he intended to call the Schwanthaler Serum—with which the eyes were to be inoculated, and thereby receive the power of seeing through non-transparent substances.

He had tried it on guinea pigs, and by close observation of their movements he had been led to believe that his serum was a success; nevertheless, there was still an element of uncertainty; a supreme experiment was necessary; it must be tried on the eye of a human being.

He had been in such a confused state of mind during the past week that he had neglected everything, even his *fiancée*—for the learned Doctor, who was not quite forty, had only lately become engaged. He could think of nothing but his experiments and the grand scientific discovery with which his name would for ever be associated.

The supreme experiment! Upon whom was it to be made? Think of the marvellous results which would be obtained were the serum proved to be all that he believed it to be. In surgery, the Röntgen Rays would be nowhere compared with the power given by the Schwanthaler Serum; while the latter would be of valuable assistance in scores of ways in which the former could be of no use.

Dr. Schwanthaler meditated at great length. He had devoted his life to science hitherto; why should he not go a step farther and inoculate his own eyes? Why should he not be the first to reap the benefits of his own labour? Yes, he would do it!

He took up the little syringe, filled it with the serum, adjusted the platinum needle, and walked to the window to have more light. Then he paused and reflected for a few seconds. It was not necessary to inoculate both eyes for the experiment. No! He would try one eye at a time; it should be the left eye.

He nerved himself for the ordeal, and boldly plunged the needle under the crystalline lens. It was all over! The eye had been inoculated. It was six o'clock in the evening, and he threw himself on the bed, closed his eyes and endeavoured to go to sleep. Overcome by the strain of work and excitement, he soon dropped off into an uneasy slumber.

When Dr. Schwanthaler awoke on the following morning he was conscious of a smarting pain in his left eye, and also a general drowsiness which he could not understand. He dressed himself mechanically, hardly knowing what he was doing; and when he had finished his toilette he sat down in a chair, buried his face in his hands and tried to think.

Just then there was a knock at the door and the landlady entered with his breakfast. The familiar sound of the landlady's voice acted upon him like a charm, as he himself would have expressed it; he remembered all as he sprang from his chair, shut his right eye and looked at her with the eye which he had inoculated with the serum on the previous evening.

Dr. Schwanthaler recoiled, partly with horror, partly with pleasure. Instead of the plump features of Mrs.

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Decker he beheld a skeleton head—or, rather, something like a skeleton head. All the bones were plainly visible, as were the brain and the other inner portions of the human head, while the eyes, twinkling in their bony sockets, had a transparent appearance which allowed him to see all the various parts, such as the retina. Mrs. Decker's arms and hands were also (apparently) devoid of their fleshy covering.

The *savant* clapped his hand to his left eye to shut out the sight, and looked at the woman with the untouched optic. He recognised the comely features and fat arms. There could be no doubt about it now; he had made a grand discovery which would be of incalculable benefit and immortalise his name.

He made a hasty breakfast, experimenting all the time by looking at his own hands. The result was not *quite* so satisfactory at he had anticipated; he had hoped to be able to see through all opaque substances, but he could only see through flesh. Nevertheless, he hoped to obtain better results later on.

After breakfast he dressed himself for his morning visit to the hospital. But he must first make a shade of some kind for his eye; it was confusing to see one thing with the right eye and another with the left, and he did not wish to see the interior arrangements of every person he met. At last he found an eyeglass, which he smeared over with some black substance; sticking this in his eye, he made his way to the hospital.

He was a well-known man, and the townspeople and students stared, as he passed with his eyeglass. But Dr. Schwanthaler paid no heed to the remarks which he overheard; he had a grand mission in life, and could afford to smile at such idle talk.

When the doctor arrived at the hospital, he found his colleagues, surrounded by students, in the midst of an operation. A poor fellow had been shot at by burglars; three bullets had entered his body, two of which had been extracted, but the third could not be found. The doctors had probed for it three times without success, and were just thinking of giving it up for that day, when Dr. Schwanthaler came on the scene. Simply as a matter of courtesy, he was asked if he could assist.

Taking his eyeglass from his left eye, he looked at the man and was able to locate the bullet without hesitation. Picking up the probe, he inserted it and the bullet was quickly extracted.

His colleagues were amazed; they were also envious. They had been trying hard to find the bullet and had been baffled; Dr. Schwanthaler had located it at once. It was too annoying.

The benefactor of mankind remained outwardly calm, although inwardly full of exultation. He soon took leave of his colleagues—he was anxious to get back to his laboratory. He took out his eyeglass to shade the left eye, but by some means he let it slip; it fell on the ground and broke into little pieces. He uttered an angry exclamation under his breath, but there was no help for it.

He tried to keep his left eye shut as he walked homewards, but it was useless; he could not resist the temptation of experimenting as he went along, in spite of the fact that it was in no way pleasant to see a smiling face with one eye, and an unrecognisable fleshless head with the other.

As he pursued his way it seemed to him that not only was the sight of the inoculated eye becoming stronger—so that he could see through other substances, but also that the untouched eye was becoming affected in like manner. In spite of his devotion to science, his desire to immortalise himself and confer an immense benefit on mankind, Dr. Schwanthaler's hair nearly stood on end at the prospect of possessing this extraordinary power with both eyes.

The landlady entered with his breakfast.

He could not wear darkened glasses over the two, that would be equivalent to blindness; yet it was not pleasant to think of passing the rest of his days in continual contemplation of the internal organisation of his fellow creatures and everything around him—never to be able to see things as they are.

Here were two people just in front of him. They had that moment met, and he saw two skulls approach and knock together. It was a kiss! He shuddered and turned away. He looked around. The trees had a transparent, leafless appearance, although it was summer; the walls of the houses were not opaque, he could see dimly through them; everything, in a word, was unnatural.

He rushed home and flung himself into a chair. He tore his hair and lamented the day when he decided to make the experiment; he flung the vial of serum far into the river which flowed at the end of the short garden; and he destroyed the syringe and the various preparations he had used, and then fell senseless.

A fortnight later, when he had sufficiently recovered from an attack of brain fever to be able to act sensibly, he found that he was quite blind in the left eye, and that the right eye was normal. And he heaved a sigh of relief that he was freed from that terrible power.

But he has abandoned his investigations and intends to keep secret the composition of his serum. So the world will never be enlightened on the subject of this great scientific discovery.

G. Day.

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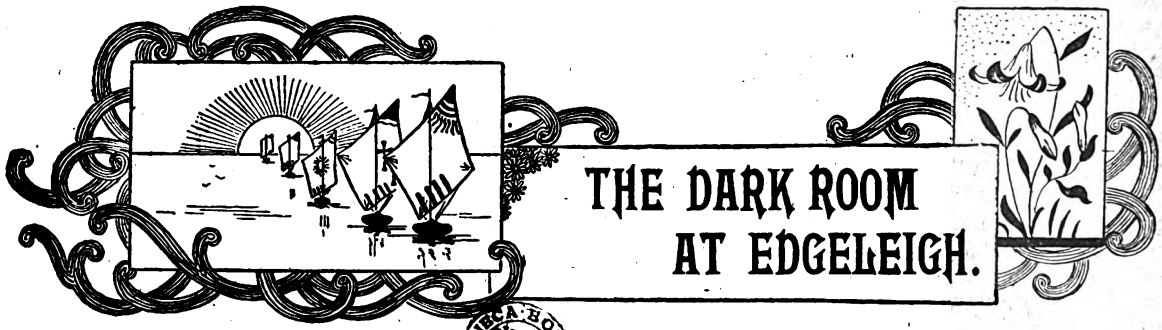

THE DARK ROOM AT EDGELEIGH.

BIBLIOTHECA HOLLANA

CHAPTER I.

Miss Mardyn's Secret.

Mr. Pitcairn, tall, handsome and robust, dismounted at the gate and walked resolutely up the walk to the house.

On the verandah sat Miss Mardyn, the handsome housekeeper at Edgeleigh, reading a book, or pretending to do so; and now, as Mr. Pitcairn ascended the steps, the book was closed gently and laid upon her knee, and the lady looked up with a rather dreary smile.

You may see a very pretty face, and might go far to find a prettier; but is there not something just a little mysterious in the eyes and about the mouth—in the general expression, to tell the truth—something not absolutely repulsive, but cruel, perhaps, and even somewhat sly?

If anything of this, Mr. Pitcairn did not observe it. Stroking a grey moustache nervously, he threw himself into an oaken chair, and said:

"Avice, you see I am agitated, and yet you don't ask why. Are you afraid of me?"

Her smile became even more languid than before, and she answered.

"Why should I be? Yes, I see that you are a little agitated. No bad news, I trust?"

"Yes, bad news. Cyril Cuthbert is coming here this evening. I have a letter from him in my pocket. He comes to ask me for Mary's hand again, although he has already had my answer. Gentlemen did not use to do these things when I was younger."

And now Miss Mardyn really laughed—rather ironically, it is true; but sweetly also.

"Now, do you know, I rather suspect Mr. Cyril Cuthbert would elope with Miss Pitcairn if he thought there was no more honourable way to win her."

"Elope!"

"Lochinvar, he would call it, and perhaps view it quite as a joke altogether."

Mr. Pitcairn stood up and began pacing the verandah, brows knit and eyes flashing.

There was no more said.

Avice Mardyn descended to Mary Pitcairn, who was walking in the garden; and while they were yet talking among the flowers, who should come galloping up the avenue but Mr. Cuthbert himself.

He was a fine-looking fellow, brawny and muscular, dark and daring. Behind him rode a servant, for in those days no gentleman was without his valet.

And so Cyril dismounted, and came up to the ladies, hand out, smiling and frank.

"Here almost as soon as my letter, I'll wager! And how are we all? Never better, if one must judge by looks. Well, Miss Mardyn, you see I have not forgotten my promise—here is the book you asked me to bring."

He produced a small, shabbily bound volume from his breast-pocket.

Its title was: "The Philosophy of Dreams."

The housekeeper at first did not apparently recollect; but presently she said:

"Oh, yes. Thank you so much, Mr. Cuthbert; and now I shall know everything about——"

But he cautioned her with a look. To Mary's surprised glance he answered:

"Only the oddest little secret between Miss Mardyn and myself, which you shall know in good time. You would not think that Miss Mardyn is greviously and peculiarly afflicted, would you? And yet it is so." And then he took Miss Pitcairn's hand as if to dissipate any little jealousy she may have felt, and added tenderly: "We will explain all in good time, dear."

CHAPTER II.

Plans for Flight.

Presently Miss Mardyn, leaving the lovers together, returned with heightened colour to the verandah. Mr. Pitcairn was still sitting there, moody and bitter.

"Lochinvar has come," said the lady.

"But he will go away without his bride," answered the old man. "I have thought of a better way than turning him out of the house. No one was ever thrust from my door yet. I shall play a diplomatic game, and cry checkmate first."

Miss Mardyn was honestly puzzled.

"He will ask for my daughter's hand, and I shall refuse him. He will then attempt an elopement with her to-night. Do you know how I am to prevent that?"

"By strict surveillance."

"Precisely. She shall sleep in the Dark Room."

"The Dark Room!"

"No one has occupied it for years, Avice, as you know. My dressing-room forms the only means of entrance or escape, and we shall see now if Mr. Cyril Cuthbert will successfully play the *rôle* he contemplates. I shall confer at once with Mary, or will you give her the message, Avice?"

The Dark Room! thought Avice Mardyn. Truly enough, it had been unoccupied for years. It was said to be haunted—someone had committed suicide there.

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And how gloomy a place it was—aptly named! But one window, and the light kept from that by two great trees outside, swaying and creaking in the windy nights.

At this point Cyril Cuthbert and Miss Pitcairn approached.

The young man was greeted coldly by the master of the house; but he took it not amiss.

Avice drew Mary into the long, dim hall.

She told her there Mr. Pitcairn's orders.

The young lady, pallid and frightened, heard attentively. Hands clasped and eyes upraised into the somewhat cruel face of the housekeeper, what were her thoughts?

Meanwhile frank and direct young Cuthbert lost no time in coming to the point with the master of Edgeleigh. Despite his entreaties, the old man was inexorable.

"Well, be it so," said Cuthbert finally. "In time you may learn to know me better and to regret this—this injustice."

And so they turned, a little constrainedly, to other topics. Cuthbert had evidently made up his mind. All that he now desired was to see Miss Pitcairn for five minutes alone.

She returned, and then he thought he detected something else—this interview could not be had.

Miss Mardyn was resolutely in the way. By whose direction? It needed no ghost to come out of the grave to answer that.

For the first time he found out what Mary Pitcairn had known from the first—that this woman was not his friend, and in business of this sort he wanted her as his friend—she was to be his enemy. A great many things just now recurred to him, and he could fit together what might otherwise have been a puzzle very well.

Miss Mardyn was, as we know, very handsome, and she was also accomplished, clever, and a woman of the world. Now, it is not safe to slight a woman like this, especially if she is as unscrupulous as comely; and so Cuthbert felt at length what it was beginning to cost him to have preferred so boldly another, younger, and by many degrees less gifted in certain senses.

However, he accepted the situation resignedly. He thought that he held a trump card.

Avice Mardyn, in a weak moment, when they first became acquainted, had confided to him a secret. It could not be dishonourable to use his knowledge for a purpose of his own now; for is not all fair in love? And he suspected something also—Miss Mardyn would not object to be mistress of Edgeleigh.

Luckily Mr. Pitcairn soon left the verandah for his study. Cyril sauntered over to the housekeeper, who was pensively contemplating the just rising evening star.

"We are playing chaperon to-night, are we not?"

She turned, her face for an instant flushed.

"Do you think so?"

"I know so. Mr. Pitcairn has directed you to prevent any private word between Mary and myself. I used to believe you were too good a friend of mine to league against me."

"You forget that duty is a higher claim than even friendship," said the lady, perhaps with faint sarcasm.

"Well, let us understand each other. Your duties, my dear Miss Mardyn, would quickly end here, I fancy, if my good friend Pitcairn knew that you had once upon a time taken a human life—your husband's."

She laid her hand upon his arm quickly, and her breathing was quick and fast.

"You will not betray me, Cyril?"

"Betray? Nonsense! I learned part of your secret by accident; the remainder you told me of your own free will. A short time ago, while stopping here at Edgeleigh, I happened, while enjoying a quiet midnight pipe upon the lawn, to meet a lady walking in her sleep. I awoke her, and found her to be Miss Avice Mardyn. She, the next day, while suffering from the reaction of opium, which she used habitually, though in secret, confided to me that she had once been known elsewhere as Mrs. Powys, and in a somnambulic trance had involunarily stabbed her husband. Nothing incredible in all that; but a useful thing to know, as I find now. I am very well aware, in addition, that you still use opium."

"Cyril, mercy!" she whispered.

Mary Pitcairn sat some distance from them, perhaps wondering at Cyril's want of gallantry, but she could hear nothing of this dialogue.

"Mercy, on condition that you give me ten minutes' speech alone with the young lady at the other end of the verandah."

"Yes, yes! But for my sake—and yours, too—no more than ten minutes."

Cyril gave Mary his arm, and they descended into the grounds.

There is a beautiful grove just to the right of Edgeleigh and thither they went.

An oak, long since shivered by lightning, gave them a seat, and here, Mary's hand in his, Cyril laid his plan.

"Darling, you must leave this place with me to-night. I have brought both my horses, and they must have fleet steeds who follow," quoth this young Lochinvar.

"But it is impossible, Cyril. I am to sleep in that dreadful Dark Room. Papa's dressing-chamber is the only means of entrance or exit."

Cyril laughed lightly.

"Do you forget who once lived here, sweet? My mad uncle, Byron Cuthbert—as great a rake as his namesake. The Dark Room is an enigma of which your father's dressing-room is not the only key."

"What do you mean, Cyril?"

"Only this—that there is a secret door to the Dark Room, by which to-night I mean to enter and carry you off. You remember the portrait of Miss Eleanor Digby at the right of the bed?"

"Yes; with the falcon on her finger, and in that stiff, high-necked dress."

"There are nine gilt circles in the frame, apparently ornaments; but one of these is useful likewise. The secret door can only be opened from the other side; but by pressing the upper part of this gilt circle—the fifth from the bottom—it will divide and form a sort of bolt. In that case the door cannot be opened at all."

"Oh, how strange, Cyril!"

"There is a staircase hidden—I will not tell you just now where," he added in a low voice, glancing round. "But when you retire to your room, dress for your flight, darling. I shall come, be assured; and do not fail in being ready."

"Oh, Cyril, I am so afraid!"

"Nonsense! To-morrow you will laugh at fear. We shall then be safely married, you know, and I've no doubt but we shall see penitent papa riding up to my gate—our gate—soon afterwards; and then, you know, reconciliation and the fatted calf and the champagne, and all the rest of it, eh?—over the return of the prodigal parent."

"What time will you come to-night, Cyril?"

"At twelve," he said.

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CHAPTER III.

The Figure Emerges from the Secret Door.

In front of the mirror over the bureau in the Dark Room stood Mary Pitcairn, dressing for contemplated flight that night with Cyril Cuthbert. Two tall candlesticks and the candles lighted gave dismal light at either hand.

No wonder the place was called by its gloomy name, for it was truly gruesome and murky as a hermit's cave.

Miss Pitcairn every now and then paused in her silent labours to glance at the door at the far end of the chamber, or to steal a peep at the portrait of Mistress Eleanor Digby, with her falcon on her prim finger, from behind whom we know what apparition was soon expected to step forth.

By that tiny watch lying on the bureau, and ticking away so cheerfully, we see that it is nearly half-past eleven o'clock. The wind is moaning outside; for, winter or summer, it always moans here; and the two great trees are wagging their gigantic heads at the window, and seemingly trying to peer in; but with this one exception there is a mournful silence.

Pallid and nervous, Miss Pitcairn continued her preparations. Just as she gave the last touch to her hat, she was startled by the turning of the knob of the door that led from her father's dressing-room.

The next instant Mr. Pitcairn was in the room.

There was something so dreadful in his countenance that the girl was frozen with terror where she stood. He was in his shirt sleeves. In his hand he held a revolver.

His lips were white and shrunken, like those of a man in mortal sickness, and his eyes were bloodshot; but he looked like a fiend. He had taken off his shoes, and was in his stockings, and now he walked over and sat down.

Mary Pitcairn recovered something of her strength, and threw herself at his feet.

"Papa, what is the matter?" she cried wildly. "What are you going to do? Why don't you speak to me—to your own Mary who loves you, papa? How you terrify me when you stare so! What have I done—only tell me what I have done, papa?"

"You were overheard to-night," he said huskily. "I know all. You are dressed, I perceive; but you will not leave Edgeleigh as soon as you anticipate."

"Oh, forgive me, darling papa! Indeed, he loves me—and—and—you would not consent to our marriage—and all this is my fault—indeed it is. He is not to blame."

"Not to blame? Humph! Wait."

He still kept his eyes fixed upon the portrait, the pistol grasped in his firm hand.

"Oh, papa, what are you going to do? I never saw you look so before," wept the poor girl distractedly. "You will not injure him. Punish me. It is I alone who deserve your anger, papa. I swear it is not his fault."

"Avice Mardyn overheard everything. She found out the entrance to the hidden staircase. Clever Avice!" he laughed horribly. "I shall marry her for this, and make her mistress of this place."

But in uttering these words he did not once glance at the child kneeling before him. It was a kind of soliloquy. He stared steadfastly at the picture.

"Oh, papa, you mean to do something dreadful. I see it in your face. You mean to kill him! But you have no right—you have no right. He has done nothing as yet—nothing at all. It will be murder!"

"I have the right to kill the man who enters my daughter's room secretly at midnight, and, by the Heaven above us, I mean to use it!"

Her hysterical pleading was like the despair of the Last Day. But she spoke to marble. Perhaps he pitied her—it would be hard to believe otherwise—but his purpose was inexorable.

And now she stood up, her hands crossed upon her distracted head. What could be done? A thought flashed upon her—the fifth gilt circle from the bottom! If she could press this unobserved her lover was saved.

"I don't believe there is a secret door," she suddenly broke out, in a changed tone. "This is some dull jest to frighten me. You, papa, and Cyril, have laid this plot, but I am not to be so deceived."

She went over to the portrait and began to beat against it with her small hand. "It is solid—it is," she said. "I knew there was no door. A pretty thing that none of us should ever have heard of it before to-night! Listen to that—solid as masonry. And see this frame, too; it can't be moved the eighth of an inch."

All the while her eyes were counting the gilt circles from the bottom. She came to the fifth. Her fingers pounces upon it in a second, and she was about to press the upper part. At the same moment another hand—her father's—writhed across her shoulder and clasped her own.

"Let that be. Sit down in that chair," he said, pointing to a crimson Pompadour by the bureau.

There was something awful in his tone—so terrible that she yielded at once. But she knew that all was over now. The hands of the watch wanted three minutes to twelve. She hid her face in her hands, but had not even the relief of tears.

Pitcairn went over to the chest of drawers and blew out the candles. A soft ray of moonlight stole in at the window, sufficient to illuminate the portrait.

He crossed back again to his seat, and held the pistol upon his knee.

In another minute there was a light step. With a creak and a groan something was pushed aside. A draft of cold and musty air blew into the room. A figure emerged from the shadow into the moonlight.

There was a shot and a scream.

Pitcairn cried, "Good God!" and he hastily relighted the candles. The atmosphere was heavy with the smell of powder and smoke.

He went over to the body on the floor, and found he had shot and killed Avice Mardyn, walking in her sleep.

Through the secret doorway Cyril Cuthbert, top-booted and hat on head, ready for riding, now appeared.

"You have murdered her for me, Mr. Pitcairn," he said quietly; and then in a few words he told of the dead woman's secret habit—opium eating—and how she sometimes wandered about in trances produced by the drug.

Pitcairn stared like a man who had lost his senses. Presently he began groping about the room, and muttering incoherently to himself. He left the chamber and shut himself up elsewhere, and nothing more was seen of him that night.

Next day he was taken ill. He lingered for many weeks in a state of delirium; but one evening, about sunset, all his faculties returned to him. He called Mary Pitcairn and her lover to his bedside, and gave them his blessing; and then, with a sigh, he closed his eyes and was no more.

Horace Adler.

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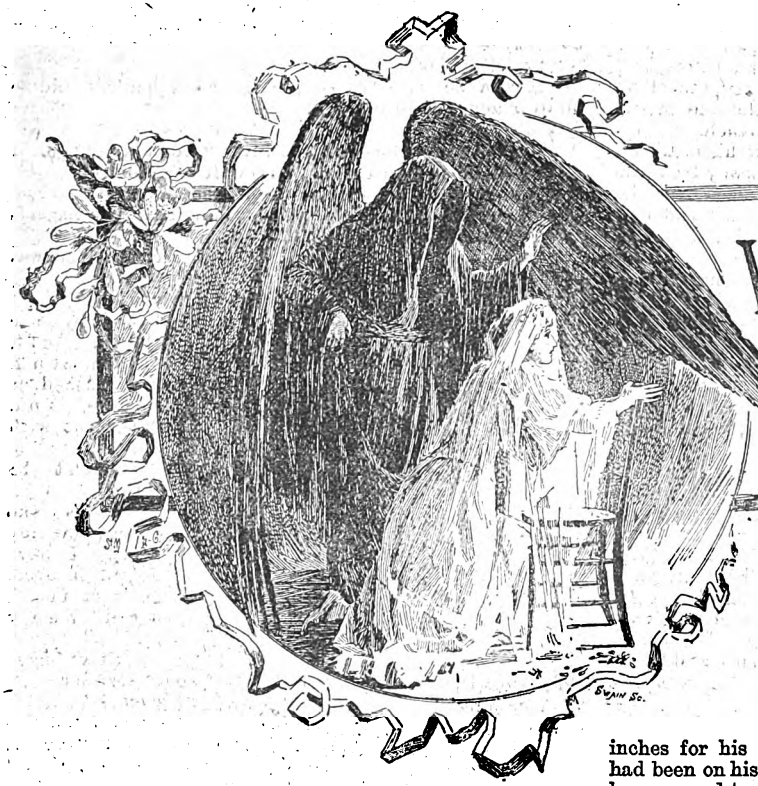

THE WYTHECOMBE MYSTERY:

A ROMANCE.

By J. K. Leys.

Illustrated by S. Mar. Fitz-Gerald.

CHAPTER I.

'Twixt Life and Death.

"Can I risk it?"

The young man lay on the edge of the cliff and peered down. Nine or ten feet below him was a narrow ledge, covered with short grass, perhaps two feet wide. Towards his left, that is, to the north-west, the ledge continued till it reached the corner of the cliff. The sun had set, and the clouds opposite were already glowing in gorgeous colours—gold, and amber, and crimson—but it seemed as if that part of the horizon which was invisible, hidden by the projection of the hill on the left, must be even more glorious than the part that could be seen. The young fellow lying on the edge of the cliff was an artist; his sketching materials lay on the ground at his side; he had climbed far up the hill in the hope of being able to catch the sunset at its finest; and it was intolerable to him that he should after all miss the best part of the magnificent spectacle.

"Can I risk it?" he said to himself again. "I think I might. The ledge seems broad enough. Once down there I could make my way to the corner easily enough. But the getting up again? Ah! I have it!"

Rising to his feet, he quickly undid a leather strap which was round his portfolio, and passed it round the trunk of a small mountain-ash that grew near the edge of the precipice. Then, without giving himself time to think—for Launcelot Vere was painfully aware that his nerves were not the steadiest in the world—he grasped the free end of the strap in his left hand, and let the lower half of his body slide over the edge. Lower still he descended, supporting himself by his elbows. Down—down still—lower yet—till he was hanging by his fingers.

Then he dropped.

A cry of agony pierced the air.

The outer edge of the grassy surface had broken away under the weight of his left foot, leaving less than twelve inches for his support; but the chief part of his weight had been on his right foot, and, with one desperate struggle, he managed to get his left knee on the narrow shelf, and clinging convulsively to the breast of the rock he drew up his left foot, and stood upright.

Vere was a slightly built man, not particularly robust, and untrained in gymnastics. For him to have done even what he had done under any less pressure than the prospect of instant death, would have been a sheer impossibility.

After pausing a moment to recover his breath, he let his eyes wander over the rocky wall in search of the strap. It was hanging, as he knew it must be, within easy distance of his left hand; and he speedily grasped it.

Then he looked slowly around to see whether there was any better way of escape than scrambling up the few feet of rock in front of him. It soon became evident that there was not only no better way, but no other way whatever. Below there was only the naked precipice, he knew that. To right and left the broken ledge was not merely narrow and sloping, but manifestly unsound. He must climb up. It was not a great distance. The rock was rough enough to afford him some foothold, and, above all, he had the strap.

He grasped it as high up as he could, and gave it a hard pull.

To his horror it came away in his hand!

One moment he stood speechless, absolutely dumb with terror. The next, a cry to heaven for mercy went up from the hill, then a wild scream for help.

Help? How could help come to him on that lonely Welsh hillside? But he would not think it impossible, for it was his only chance. Death now stared him in the face. Already the constrained position he was standing in made him feel cramped and sore. To stay there till morning would be impossible. To move to right or left was equally impossible. Again and again his shouts rang out. Oh, how weak, how pitifully weak they sounded in that solitude! The grim rock above him shut in his cries, making it almost absurd to hope that they could be heard.

There was no answering cry. He hardly expected that there should be; and yet he strained his ears to listen time

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after time. The minutes seemed hours, and he fancied it was already getting dark. A feeling like despair came over the poor fellow; he shouted more madly than before, and then, putting his fingers to his lips, he whistled, schoolboy fashion, sending the shrill notes far along the side of the mountain, much farther than his voice could reach.

The mere effort to do this seemed to relieve his faculties. Another thing, he managed to ease his toes away from the rock a little without allowing his heels to project over the abyss; and the relief to the muscles of his back and legs was considerable. He put his arm on the rock, leant his face on it, and tried to think.

No; there was nothing he could think of—nothing he could do. He must husband his breath, and shout at intervals as loud as he could, on the chance that some shepherd coming down the hill might hear him. For the rest, he must hold on to that narrow shelf of ground, from which, every now and then, he heard a morsel crumble off and fall away down—down—with a sickening rattle far away below. "God grant," he said to himself, "that I may not go mad before the end comes."

Slowly the light faded out of the west, the gorgeous hues turning to pale yellow, green, and grey. The foliage of the rowan-tree which he could just see overhead became more and more indistinct. Launcelot was conscious that his strength was going fast. The strain was so frightful that he felt as if merely to sit down and rest on the shelf he stood on, knowing that he could never recover his upright position, would be a relief so sweet that it was worth his life to have it.

His limbs were beginning to tremble, when he suddenly started, and bent his head to one side. He was not deceived.

Faint and clear, like a bell of a mountain goat, came a voice from above:

"Where are you?"

"Here! Here! For God's sake come! Come quickly. My strength is failing."

A minute of silence, and again he called out. A third time he cried in his agony: "Come! For God's sake come quick."

And the voice answered: "I am coming as fast as I can."

The cramp was almost unendurable; but the poor fellow waited in silence—waited for what seemed at least half-an-hour (in reality not five minutes)—and then the voice hailed him once more. This time it was directly over his head.

"Are you down there? I can't see—— Oh, good gracious, yes!"

Vere was there, clinging like a fly to the face of the cliff; and above him there peered over the edge a girl's head. He could hardly distinguish it in the darkness from a man's; but he knew by the voice that it was certainly a woman who was looking down at him.

Then—

"How on earth did you get down there?"

"Easily enough. The question is how I can get up again. I am standing on a ledge of rock so narrow that I can barely keep my footing. If you can't help me I must perish."

"I will run and bring someone to help you," cried the girl; and the head was suddenly withdrawn.

"No! No! No! For God's sake stay where you are. You never could find the place again in the dark; and long before you could get back from the village I shall have dropped over. The cramps are already more than I can bear."

"But what can I do? I can't reach you."

"No; and if you could it would be of no use. I should only pull you over. Haven't you got a cord of any kind about you?"

"A cord? No!"

"Or anything of which a cord might be made?"

"No! Oh, I wish I could help you. I wish I could help you. It is dreadful!"

"There is a strap here. The buckle gave way, or I should have been able to climb up. If I could pass it up to you—but that is impossible."

"Do let me go for help."

"It is of no use—not the least. I tell you it would be all over long before you could get back."

A silence.

"Wait!" cried the girl suddenly. "Don't lose hope. I have thought of something. Just wait one minute."

A white arm waved for an instant, and vanished.

Vere set his teeth, and began to count, that the seconds might seem to pass more rapidly.

Three minutes passed, and the sweet, clear voice was heard once more.

"Look—I am letting something down to you!"

And the next instant Vere found his head swept by some thick, soft, woollen stuff. He brushed it aside, and grasped it with one hand.

It came away in his hand!

"What is this?"

"It is the skirt of my dress. I have ripped it open. It is of tweed, and very strong."

"How have you secured the other end?"

"I have doubled it to make it stronger, and put one end round this little tree, and I am sitting on it."

"I shall not trust my whole weight to it," said Vere after a little pause. "But it will be enough to steady me and balance me as I scramble up. There are rough places on the rocks that will give me a little foothold. One spring will do it. Only promise me one thing."

"What is it?"

"That the moment you feel the cloth slipping from under you, you will roll off on the grass, and not attempt to hold it."

No answer.

"Do you promise?"

"I can't promise that. If it slips I shall press on it more heavily."

"Then I won't come up at all."

"But that is madness!"

"I don't care. I won't endanger your life as well as my own."

"Yes; I promise."

"Here goes, then! Sit tight!"

Vere clutched the thick folds of the tweed with one hand, bent down as low as he dared, then sprang upwards—missed grasping the top of the cliff with his right, as he had hoped to do, but caught the cloth instead, swung half round, and for one dread moment his whole weight was on the dress. But it did not tear; and the next instant his toe caught in a slight projection of the rock and relieved

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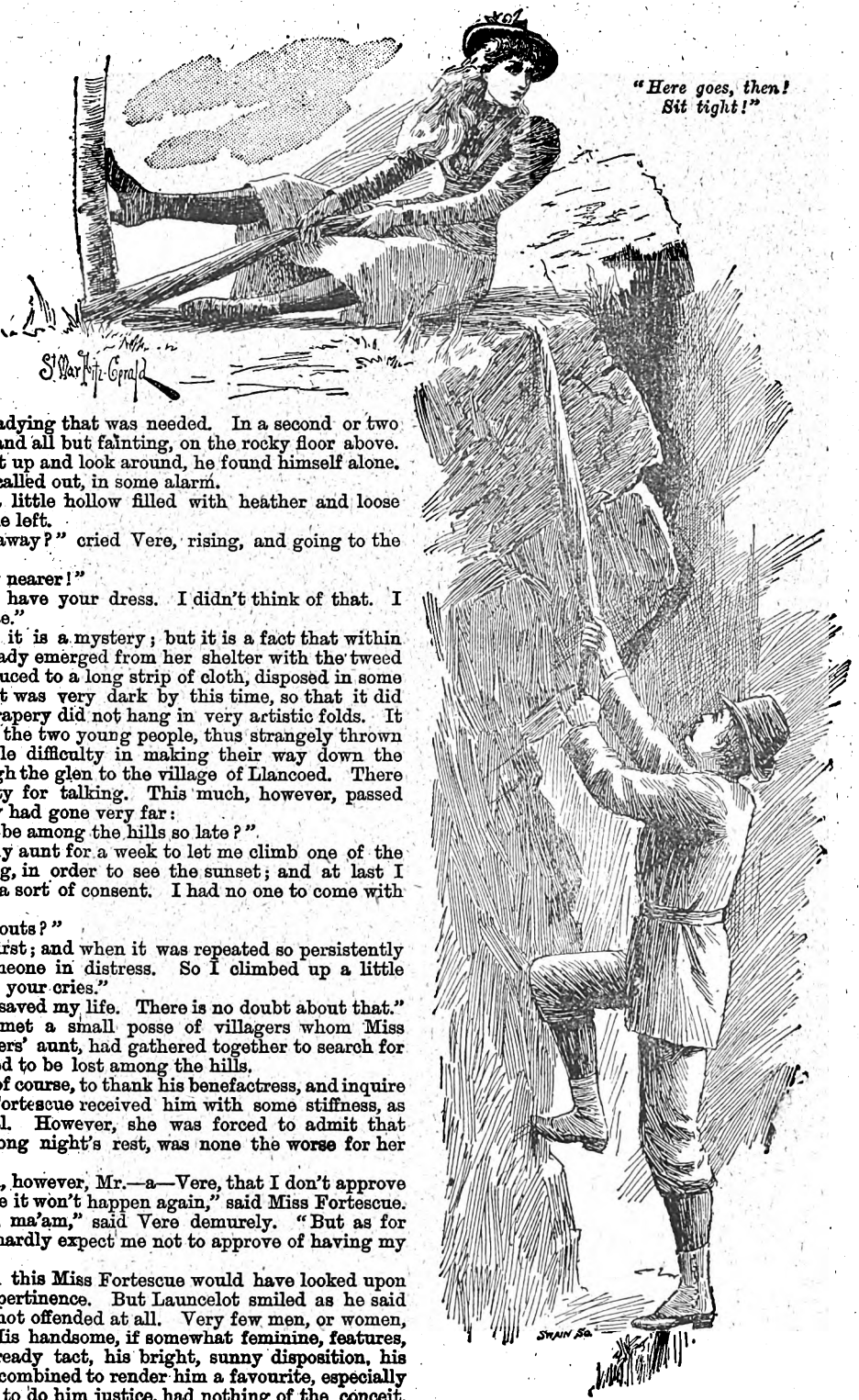
the strain. Then, working his way upwards inch by inch, he managed to get the fingers of his right hand hooked over the edge of the rock.

Now his knees grasped the cloth, and his left hand slid up a little way; then his right elbow got on the top; and so, straining and panting, he reached the summit. The moment it was practicable he let go the tweed and trusted to his elbows. It would have fared badly with him then, had not two strong girl's hands caught him by one shoulder. That gave him just the balance and steadying that was needed. In a second or two he was lying breathless, and all but fainting, on the rocky floor above.



"Here goes, then! Sit tight!"

When he was able to sit up and look around, he found himself alone.

"Where are you?" he called out, in some alarm.

An answer came from a little hollow filled with heather and loose boulders a few paces to the left.

"Why have you run away?" cried Vere, rising, and going to the spot.

"Please don't come any nearer!"

"Oh, you mean that I have your dress. I didn't think of that. I will bring it to you at once."

How she accomplished it is a mystery; but it is a fact that within five minutes that young lady emerged from her shelter with the tweed skirt, which had been reduced to a long strip of cloth, disposed in some way about her person. It was very dark by this time, so that it did not matter much if the drapery did not hang in very artistic folds. It was so dark, in fact, that the two young people, thus strangely thrown together, had considerable difficulty in making their way down the rough hillside, and through the glen to the village of Llancoed. There was but little opportunity for talking. This much, however, passed between them before they had gone very far:

"How did you come to be among the hills so late?"

"I have been teasing my aunt for a week to let me climb one of the lower hills in the evening, in order to see the sunset; and at last I worried her into giving a sort of consent. I had no one to come with me, so I came alone."

"And you heard my shouts?"

"I heard you whistle first; and when it was repeated so persistently I thought it might be someone in distress. So I climbed up a little further, and then I heard your cries."

"God bless you! You saved my life. There is no doubt about that."

At Llancoed the pair met a small posse of villagers whom Miss Fortescue, Winnie Denvers' aunt, had gathered together to search for the girl, who was supposed to be lost among the hills.

Next day Vere called, of course, to thank his benefactress, and inquire after her health. Miss Fortescue received him with some stiffness, as was perhaps but natural. However, she was forced to admit that Winnie, having had a long night's rest, was none the worse for her adventure.

"You must understand, however, Mr.—a—Vere, that I don't approve of such things, and I hope it won't happen again," said Miss Fortescue.

"I sincerely hope not, ma'am," said Vere demurely. "But as for approving of it, you can hardly expect me not to approve of having my life saved."

If anyone else had said this Miss Fortescue would have looked upon it as a piece of great impertinence. But Launcelot smiled as he said it, and the old lady was not offended at all. Very few men, or women, could resist his smile. His handsome, if somewhat feminine, features, his fine dark eyes, his ready tact, his bright, sunny disposition, his careless unselfishness, all combined to render him a favourite, especially with women. And Vere, to do him justice, had nothing of the conceit, the self-complacent priggishness of a lady's man. He seemed utterly unconscious of their regard for him.

Before he left the house that morning, he had gained the right of calling again; and he quickly availed himself of the privilege.

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Of course, under the circumstances, Launcelot could not do less than fall in love with his preserver; but it is only fair to add that he could hardly have helped falling in love with her under whatever circumstances he had met her. Winnie was a trifle under the middle height, fair, bright-eyed, and decidedly pretty. If her mouth was a shade too wide, if there was here and there a suspicion of freckles on her white forehead, Vere never noticed these slight blemishes, or he considered them to be additional charms.

The courtship proceeded with marvellous celerity; Miss Fortescue took the alarm, but just too late, and by the time Winnie's visit was at an end, the fateful words had been spoken, and she was in a state of palpitating, strange, delightful, semi-delirium.

"I shall be very anxious until I hear how your father takes it," said Vere in a graver tone than usual, as he leant on the window of the railway-carriage which was to carry his love off to her home in Devonshire.

"Papa will be quite pleased when he understands how happy I am," answered Winnie with a blush.

Vere did not feel so sure. A country rector, with some hundreds a year of his own and a good living—Mr. Denvers was rector of Wythecombe—likes to know who he is giving his daughter to; and Launcelot Vere had nothing in the world beyond a half-formed reputation as a clever artist, both in landscape and portraiture. It was characteristic of him that he gratefully accepted the girl's offer to break the news of the engagement to her father. "I can always manage papa," said Winnie with some pride; so Vere stayed his hand, and the intended letter was not written.

"Why have you run away?" cried Vere.

But the Reverend Mark Denvers fairly took his daughter by surprise. He first pooh-poohed the whole wonderful story. "What, my dear? A strolling artist? Pooh, nonsense, my love. You ought to have more self-respect than hint at such things, even in jest."

Winnie was distressed, mortified, bewildered. But she persevered in saying that it was quite true; and presently a letter came from Vere which proved to the Rector that something serious was contemplated. Of course he peremptorily forbade the whole thing, but that did no good. The lovers continued to correspond; they had no intention of giving one another up; and the Rector was secretly unhappy. Then a speaking likeness—really a charming picture—of his daughter arrived from London, and being timidly presented to the Rector by Winnie, went far to soften his heart. At length Mr. Denvers gave way. He caught up his sad-faced little girl one day, kissed her, and told her she might send for that wonderful lover of hers whenever she pleased.

Vere came down, and submitted to inspection, and the Rector was forced to admit that he was a gentleman, and a very pleasant person to talk to. After that, his opposition was but half-hearted; and, finally, it was arranged that the wedding should take place in the following September.

In August Launcelot paid a second visit to Wythecombe Rectory, and stayed for some days, during which all the details were settled. The young couple were not to take a house at first, but live in furnished rooms (and save money) for the first six months, and the Rector promised to help with the furnishing later on. The bridesmaids were chosen, one of them being Winnie's bosom friend, Katharine Dale. Katharine lived with her widowed mother in a small house not far from the Rectory.

Launcelot had one friend in that part of the country, a man called Harold Kenyon, the manager of a branch bank at Darnport, a small seaport town about three miles from Wythecombe. Kenyon was one of Vere's oldest and most intimate acquaintances, and he readily promised to act the part of best man.

But amid all the pleasant fuss and bustle of the coming marriage, there was an uneasy consciousness among the Rector's daughters—Mrs. Denvers had been dead for some years—that their father did not really approve of the match. The fact was, that he had wished Winnie to marry some local squire, a substantial, genial soul, with no nonsense of cosmopolitan culture or feminine refinement about him—some man who would live quietly at home from Yule to Christmas, and never want to take his wife anywhere outside the county boundaries.

Vere was in many respects the antipodes of the ideal husband he had thought out for Winnie. He had consented to the marriage because he could not have his pretty daughter going about the house like a ghost; but he yielded to her entreaties with a distinctly bad grace, with many a half-smothered growl, and with an irrepressible inward misgiving as to the result of such a union.

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CHAPTER II.

A Strange Disappearance.

There was a pleasant stir about the pretty Devonshire village on Winnie Denvers' wedding morning. Groups of women assembled on the Green to discuss the event in all its bearings; many of the farmers had given their men a holiday, and the two public-houses were well filled. By eleven the church was crowded.

Just as the clock in the weather-beaten stone tower overhead struck the hour, the vestry door was flung open, and the bride came into the church leaning on her father's arm. Everybody turned and craned out his or her neck to get a good look at her. And indeed the sight was one worth looking at—the slender, fairy-like figure all in white, her yellow hair glinting through the cloudy lace veil that covered it, while her father, a portly, well-preserved man of sixty, stalked along by her side.

After them came four bridesmaids.

A heavy frown came over the Rector's face as he surveyed the people sitting near the chancel steps. The bridegroom was not there.

"Where is Launcelot?" he said to his daughter in an angry whisper, as if she were already responsible for the sins and shortcomings of her future husband. Then, recognising the absurdity of blaming his daughter, he added: "Bad taste to keep you waiting even for a second, my darling."

"He will be here immediately, I am sure, papa," whispered the bride in reply. "Perhaps the church clock is a little fast."

Now, any expression cast on the accuracy of the church clock was like smoke in the Rector's nostrils; but he made no reply. Only, he shut his lips tight, wheeled round to the altar, and contemplated with magisterial severity an angel flying heavenwards, as depicted in the east window.

Meantime the tiny hand that lay on his arm trembled a little. But Winnie did not look round. She was at once too proud to seem anxious for her bridegroom's coming, and too shy to face the crowd of curious eyes. Her gaze was fixed on the marble pavement at her feet. But her ears were on the stretch, listening with all their might for the well-known step.

Still she heard it not.

The vestry door moved. It was slowly opened, and the Rector threw a quick glance towards it. But he was speedily undeceived. Instead of the pale, delicate, refined countenance he hoped to see, he beheld a cloud of billowy white, and above it a red face terminating in a pink cranium, which was bounded on either side by a hedge of stubbly white hair. This was Canon Drake, the Rector's chief friend and ally, who had come to perform the marriage rite.

The Rector shuffled uneasily, shook his head, and finally frowned in so fierce a manner, that the Reverend Gabriel Drake precipitately retreated. The vestry door closed after him with a bang.

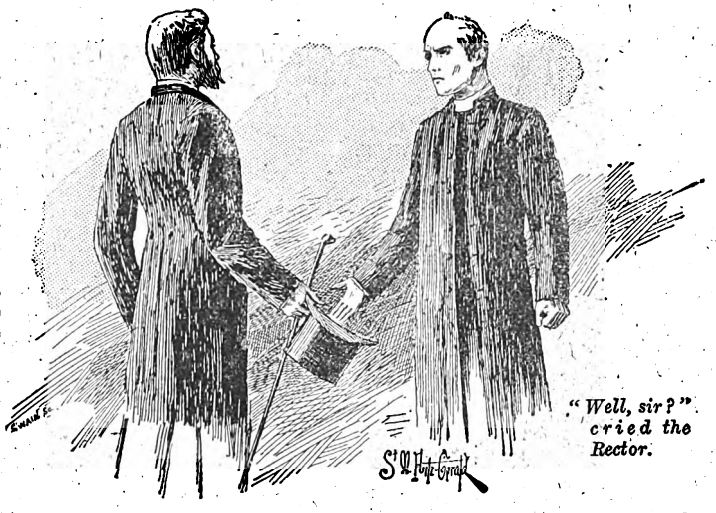
Then swiftly, without a word of warning, the Rector walked up to the vestry door, carrying his daughter with him, and followed by four blushing and wondering bridesmaids.

One by one the little party passed through the narrow door and disappeared.

Everybody in the church stared at his neighbour. Some of the spectators looked concerned; but most of them were grinning. Here and there one could hear a titter.

Hardly had the vestry door closed behind the last of the bridesmaids, when the Rector's wrath burst forth like a fiery torrent.

"Monstrous! Intolerable! The puppy! The—hem!—the insolent puppy! To dare to treat my daughter in this way! But I wash my hands of him. Never shall that fellow be son-in-law of mine!"



"Well, sir?" cried the Rector.

"My dear Denvers," put in the Canon, "consider. The poor fellow may have been taken ill suddenly; or he may have got into a wrong train; or there may have been some delay on the line. A thousand things may have happened which he could neither foresee nor prevent."

But this attempt to quell the storm only made the Rector more angry. He turned on the red-faced clergyman as if *he* had been the cause of Launcelot Vere's unaccountable behaviour.

"Sir!" cried his reverence, "I say a man ought to be at the altar at the hour named, *whatever* may happen."

"Even if he happened to die?" retorted the Canon with a smile. The next moment he repented his ill-timed jest. The bride, who had overheard him, turned white to the lips, and all but fainted. Two of the bridesmaids rushed out to seek for a glass of water. The other two supported her in their arms.

"I am better now. It was very foolish of me," she said with a faint smile.

"Come home, my darling," said the Rector tenderly. "It is long past the hour——"

He stopped, for the door leading to the churchyard had been hastily opened, and a young man in correct wedding attire, but with an anxious troubled expression on his face, burst into the room. They all knew him. It was Harold Kenyon, the best man, a special friend, as we know, of the missing bridegroom.

"Well, sir?" cried the Rector, turning on him fiercely.

"I have been to the station," panted the young man, for he was breathless with running. "He didn't come by the last train, and the train wasn't late. And I have been to the post-office. No telegram has come. I can't understand it."

"Neither can I," said the clergyman coldly, as he offered his arm to the bride. She rose and took it. "Come, girls," he said to the bridesmaids. "You may tell your friend," he added to Kenyon, "that he need not trouble to come again to the Rectory. If he does, the door will be shut in his face."

Winnie, hearing this, fairly burst out crying; and the bridal party set out for the Rectory, which lay just beyond the churchyard. Kenyon threw an imploring look at the last of the four bridesmaids, a tall girl with pale beautiful features, and a coronet of black hair coiled on the top of her head. This was Katharine Dale. She felt that he was looking at her and blushed slightly. Then, just as she passed him, she met his gaze.

"May I speak with you?" he said in a low tone. In reply she glanced in the direction of the Rectory, and nodded. Kenyon understood her to mean that he would have an opportunity of seeing her as she left the house, and he

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Sat down on a flat tombstone.

walked on towards the other end of the churchyard, where a wicket gate gave access to the Rectory garden.

As he passed the church porch he paused to allow a stream of people who were leaving the church to pass him. The children, released from their long waiting, were rushing noisily about.

"Where's the schulemistress? Why don't she keep the young uns in better order?" asked somebody.

"She's gone away!" cried one of the boys gleefully.

"Where's she gone?" asked one of the crowd.

"I dunno. Nobody's seed ur sin the day afore yest'day," answered the urchin, scudding off across the flat gravestones.

"Sarves th' parson's lass right, takin' up wi' a middlewit like thicky Vere; they say he's only a painter man," said one of the lads.

"He's a proper ape, makin' a vule o' her afore all the parish," chimed in his sweetheart.

Harold walked on to avoid hearing more. It was not surprising that these simple-minded folks should resent the slight cast on their parson's daughter; nor was it to be wondered at that they set down the pale Londoner, with his delicate artist's face, as an effeminate good-for-nothing. But it pained him to hear such talk, when, for all he knew, his poor friend might be stark and dead. He knew Launcelot Vere well; for years they had chummed together in London lodgings; and Kenyon thought he could have sworn that nothing but death or mortal sickness could have kept him away from Wythecombe that day.

Soon Harold reached a secluded part of the churchyard, from which he could observe the gate through which Katharine Dale, the girl he wished to see, must pass, and sat down on a flat tombstone.

He had not long to wait.

He heard the latch of the little gate click, and his heart beat painfully, beat so that for the instant he could not have spoken.

A sad smile was on the girl's face as she approached.

"You wanted to see me?" she said gently.

"Yes. I want some one to tell Miss Denvers that I am *certain* it is not Vere's fault that he is not here. I would stake my life on it."

"But you have only your own belief to offer; you have no evidence."

"True, I have no evidence; but I know Launcelot Vere as well as I know myself. He is weak in some respects, but he is incapable of staying away deliberately. Something must have happened to him. He may have been run over in the street, for example, and taken to a hospital."

"It would not comfort Miss Denvers much to suggest that to her," said Kate.

Her companion scarcely heard her. His eyes were fixed on a lad who was coming up the lane, whistling—a lad with a brown envelope in his hand.

Harold rushed up to the boy and snatched the telegram from him. Kate, watching his face as he read the message, saw it suddenly change. It grew pale, then hard and stern.

"It is not from Vere," he said abruptly. "It is from a friend to whom I wired this morning, begging him to call at Vere's rooms and make inquiries. This what he says—

"'Called at Vere's. He has not been at his rooms since Tuesday afternoon. Left no message. Shall I inform police?'"

"This is very strange," murmured Miss Dale. The young man was staring at her with his clear, brown eyes, but she did not feel offended, nor did she shrink from his gaze as she had done lately. She saw that he was not thinking of her at that moment.

"Miss Dale," he said in a voice that was hoarse with excitement, but perfectly firm, "either poor Launcelot is dead, or has met with an accident or foul play of some kind. I am going to look for him, and I shall look till I find him. I shall start for London at once, and you will tell Miss Denvers that——"

"Don't let me interrupt your conversation," said a voice close by. The speaker's steps had not been audible on the thick turf of the grassy lane. Katharine blushed furiously, but did not look round just at once. Harold, looking up, saw a good-looking man, just over the middle height, physically strong, dressed in correct morning costume—a man with a sallow complexion, fine dark eyes, hair, whiskers, and moustache all cut short, no beard. A *pince-nez* dangled from his waistcoat button. His age might have been anything between thirty and forty. His air was quiet, pleasant, distinctly that of a gentleman.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Shenstone?" said Harold rather stiffly.

The new-comer returned the salutation rather more cordially, lifted his hat with a smile to Miss Dale, and held the hand she offered him a second or two longer than was necessary. This was only natural, as the two were engaged to be married.

"We were speaking about Mr. Vere's strange absence," said Kate. She spoke to her *fiancé*, but kept her eyes fixed on Kenyon's face. "Mr. Kenyon thinks something must have happened to him, as he has not been heard of at his rooms for the last two days."

"You don't say so!"

"Yes. Mr. Kenyon has just had a telegram. He is going up to London to make inquiries."

"Oh, indeed—yes. Of course, some of Mr. Vere's friends ought to make inquiries."

"He has no relations—none in this country, at all events; and I believe no nearer friend than I."

"Yes; you would be the very person. But won't you find it difficult to get away from the bank? If you like——"

At this moment a housemaid came running down the garden-path with a message for Miss Dale. "Miss Winifred," she said, "was in a very sad way, and would Miss Dale go back and sit with her a bit?"

She turned at once to go, her lover walking as far as the garden gate by her side.

Kenyon waited for him to return.

"You were going to say something," he said when Shenstone came back.

"Yes; I was going to say that if you could not spare the time to conduct this search—it may take a good while, you know,—I would go in your place. But I fancy you would rather go yourself."

"Yes, I would rather go myself, thanks. But there is

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something else on your mind, isn't there? You have an idea about Vere's disappearance? What is it?"

"An idea has occurred to me—it would occur to anyone—but I could not speak of it before Miss Dale. Have you heard that Miss Unwin is missing too?"

"Miss Unwin? Yes, I did hear some one say that she was not at the church this morning—that she had left home. But you don't imagine—you don't for a moment suppose that she and Vere have run away *together!* Ha! ha! ha! Excuse me, but the notion is too ridiculous." And, more from the excitement under which he was labouring than from anything superlatively funny in the idea, the young man laughed long and loudly.

"My dear fellow," remonstrated the other, "don't say *I* said they eloped. I only say it is odd that the two disappearances should have taken place at one and the same time. It may be only a coincidence, but these things generally are *not* coincidences."

"The girl may only have gone home for a day or two."

"Possibly; but it is odd that she did not tell any one where she was going. She left on Tuesday morning."

Tuesday morning! And the telegram had said that Vere had not been at his rooms since Tuesday afternoon! The thought staggered Kenyon for a moment.

"How do you happen to know this?" he asked sharply.

"The Rector told me," answered Shenstone. "He sent to ask me to play something on the organ this morning, as Miss Unwin had bolted—that was his expression, I think." Shenstone's tone was mild, so much so that Harold took it as a rebuke.

"You must excuse me, Mr. Shenstone," he said. "This affair has upset me so that I hardly know what I am saying. But I *cannot* believe that my friend has eloped with a woman like Miss Unwin, when he was on the point of being married to a lovely girl like Winnie Denvers."

"It certainly does seem odd."

"Odd! It is impossible! Why, I don't suppose he even knew of Miss Unwin's existence."

"There you are mistaken at all events," said Paul Shenstone quietly.

"How do you know?"

"Simply because I was in Dr. Luxton's waiting-room one day when your friend was down here—not the last time—the time before—and I happened to be looking out of window, and saw him meet Miss Unwin. Whether the meeting was accidental or not I can't, of course, say; but it was friendly enough. He smiled; she blushed—you know the sort of thing—they shook hands, and he turned and walked with her till they passed out of sight."

A housemaid came . . . with a message.

"It is not true!" cried Harold passionately. "That is, I mean, it *can't* be true. You *must* have been mistaken."

"My dear fellow, the thing happened in broad daylight. Others must have seen it as well as I."

"Then he must have met her somewhere before. There may be a perfectly innocent explanation—"

"Oh, certainly! I only mentioned it because you seemed to think the two had not been acquainted. But what do you mean to do?"

"I shall go first of all to the schoolhouse and ascertain all I can about Miss Unwin's departure—find out whether it really seems to be an elopement or not."

"You could not do better."

"Then I shall go up to town this afternoon, and to-morrow I shall visit or send to the hospitals, the police-stations, the

Shenstone paused for some seconds.

houses of all his acquaintances. Is there anything else you think I might do?"

Shenstone paused for some seconds, and when he did speak it was in a hesitating way, as if to speak were an effort to him.

"I don't want to hurt your feelings," he said; "but if you really wish to hear tidings of your friend——"

"Yes?"

"Well, Miss Unwin left this place yesterday morning."

"So it is supposed."

"In that case, if she went to London she would arrive at Paddington about six. I should inquire there if any of the railway people noticed her, and ask whether anyone met her at the station."

Harold turned almost angrily on his companion.

"If you mean that Vere may have met her at the station, I don't believe it for one moment!" he cried.

"I daresay you are right," replied the other in a soothing tone. "I beg you not to imagine that I am accusing your friend of running off with the schoolmistress. I only say it is queer that he and this Miss Unwin should have disappeared on the same—about the same time; and that common sense suggests that if you want to find him you should try to trace the lady's movements."

"It is a thousand chances to one that anyone should have noticed Miss Unwin at Paddington—supposing she went to London."

"Quite true. I'm afraid it's a poor chance. But when you have exhausted all other means of finding Mr. Vere, it might be worth trying—that's all."

Upon this the two men parted, and Harold, as he walked rapidly on to the village, told himself that he had been unreasonably angry.

He was quite aware that he was considerably prejudiced against Shenstone, because he was to marry Katherine Dale; but that was no reason why he should resent Shenstone's drawing an inference from the facts which many people would consider a very probable one. So he resolved to try to master his prejudice and meet Kate's successful lover in a more friendly way the next time chance threw them together.

(To be continued.)

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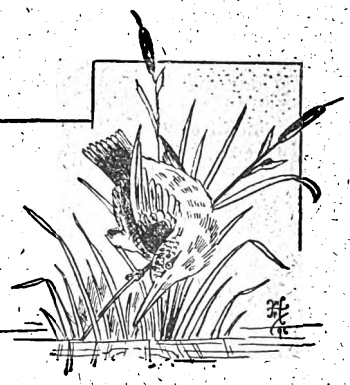
THE PITY OF IT.



They were two jolly girl bachelors. For several years they had worked together, lunched and dined and breakfasted together, shared one another's heart secrets and been inseparable companions. Men who knew them called them ideal women. When one felt sad and heart-sick and given over to the little moods that make a girl wretchedly, miserably woe-begone, the other was always there to comfort or laugh the tears away.

No. 57, Lauder Buildings, with its tiny corners filled with downy sofa cushions was the resting place for more than one weary friend, who would drop in during the evening for a cup of fragrant tea and a comfortable chat. The little brass tea-kettle would hum a busy roundelay and join in the arguments as sturdily as if its fat little body contained a fairly good pair of lungs.

Margaret was the elder of the two girls. She was always the same good-natured, laughing Margaret, but was, nevertheless, a young woman with ideas of her own and any amount of wilful determination. Their men friends raved over Margaret's pretty face, but she sadly lacked the graceful, pretty ways that so soon disappear when a girl enters the busy world of business. Her whole appearance was that of a well-informed, independent young woman who was quite content with her masculine manners and airs of a happy girl bachelor. As to Dorothy, the other girl—well, she wasn't what one would call a pretty girl. Her nose was a trifle too saucy and her mouth could have been smaller. But she had wonderfully soft and fluffy hair that curled round her ears and then tied itself in a silky knot on the top of her head.

Her eyes were always bright and were of that tender brown that one so seldom sees.

During her working hours she was modestly demure, and would never have been noticed at all, but for the reason that she wore such plain and unassuming dresses. But at home she would dress herself in marvellous costumes of white material, with many ruffles of filmy lace, and knots of pale tinted ribbons.

They were so unlike, these two girls, yet they drifted through life, each firm in her belief that no other girl lived who was quite so unselfish, so sweetly dear and so thoroughly good as her friend.

"We must be nice old spinsters, Margaret, dear," Dorothy used to say. "Or cross old maids with corkscrew curls and plenty of cats and parrots, you know, because if you were to marry and leave me I'd die from loneliness, and I'm sure you couldn't live without me."

"Indeed I could not," Margaret would answer. "But I feel sure that you will be the first one to desert our little nest."

"How can you say such dreadful things?" and Dorothy's mouth would pucker up in a most melancholy manner.

Secrets were unknown to them. Love letters were always read and commented on and considered the rightful property of both girls. Simple Dorothy would dilate at great length over her love affairs, and many a laugh did they both have when Jack Ryerson took it into his head to fall in love with her.

Jack was an artist. Not at all like the fascinating fellow in the story books, who wears velvet coats and lives in a dusty and romantic studio, but a well-built man who was employed in the art department of a commonplace publishing house. He recognised Margaret's stately carriage and her well-chiseled features, but his artist's soul was quite enraptured with Dorothy's quaint little figure and dainty manners.

"Sometimes I think that Dorothy isn't a real live girl at all," he once remarked to Margaret. "When she stood there in the doorway a moment ago, with her head tilted to one side and her hair looking so pretty, I couldn't help wondering if I were not actually looking at some old painting."

Dorothy was very fond of Jack. They used to have jolly times when she posed for his pictures, and in fact Jack Ryerson's sketches of pretty girls were unrivalled and the envy of all his fellow-workers. After each of their little sketching *séances*, Dorothy would tell Margaret all about what Jack said, and how he said it and what she said back. But one evening after Jack had gathered up his crayons and departed, Dorothy marched off to her own room without the customary chat. Margaret was alarmed, she brought out the mandoline and sang in the hopes that Dorothy would emerge from her den to have her ruffled spirits smoothed down. But no Dorothy appeared. It was after midnight and Margaret has been asleep for some time when she is aroused by a white robed figure that glided silently to her side, slid two very cold arms around her, and with a dismal little tremble, sobbed:

"Maggy, darling. I'm so wretched and unhappy!"

"Dorothy," Margaret gasped, "you'll catch your death; go back to bed and go to sleep."

"Sleep?" queried Dorothy. "I can't sleep. I haven't slept for a week. I got some powders from Dr. Hall to-day and he said that I was just nervous and tired out and needed rest, but he doesn't know anything. He——"

"Is it Jack, Dolly?" and Margaret looked into the fine brown eyes that shone in the moonlight.

I don't know myself," Dorothy doubtfully replied,

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"but I presume it is. I feel as if I hadn't a friend in the world when he's not with me, and I am too happy to breathe when he's here." Margaret smiled just then. "And that's what makes me cross and that's what makes me hate myself so. He probably says all those pretty compliments to every woman he meets. I know that he is one of those dreadful men that makes love to a girl just because he likes to and because it's as natural as breathing to him. And I loathe him. I loathe everybody but you ——" and then, with her heart unburdened and her face all damp, she buried her head on Margaret's shoulder.

* * * * *

Things were never quite the same after that. Somehow Margaret seemed less sympathetic, and Dorothy felt that she was no longer interested in her foolish affairs. Jack and Dorothy began to find comfort in their little quarrels that only those who are in love indulge in.

At last, one day their argument ended most unfortunately and, although Jack wasn't really serious, Dorothy felt sure that he was, and was quite broken-hearted.

"You do make me so unhappy," she pouted. "I almost wish that you'd go and drown yourself or hang yourself—do anything so that I'll never see you again. You keep me perfectly miserable all the time."

"Dolly! Sweetheart!" Jack pleaded. "Forgive me, I was only teasing you. I love you with all my heart!" Then noticing her sneering smile, he said desperately: "But you don't believe it."

"No, I don't," Dorothy answered pettishly. "How many girls have you said that to? How far down on the list do I come? Really, now, but doesn't your conscience trouble you when you think of all the feminine hearts that you have broken? But I presume you have become hardened to it," and then Dorothy started up a series of hysterical bursts of merriment.

"If I could only prove it, dear, I would," Jack ventured.

"Of course you can't prove it," Dolly gasped between laughs. "It is quite impossible to prove anything that is not true, you know."

"Dorothy, I can't understand you," was all Jack said, and slowly gathered together his scattered pencils, and put them in his pockets and departed without another word.

As he went out into the shadows of the street he was half inclined to rush back and entreat her to believe him. He did love her. To be sure, he had told other girls that he had loved them, but his regard for them had never been just like the affection he had for Dorothy. He would give his life for that moody, tearful bit of femininity that he had left curled up in a big arm-chair. He kept saying to himself in an insane sort of fashion: "Will you, Dorothy; I love you."

Then when he found that he had wandered for half-an-hour with the chill air cutting his face and making his ears tingle he laughed silently and said: "But I'll tease her. I'll pretend to make love to Margaret. By Jove! Why didn't I think of that before?"

A few days after that Dorothy was missed from her desk at the office, and for the first time since the beginning of their friendship Margaret lunched alone. During the long hours Dorothy wandered about Lauder Buildings, now plucking leaves from the geraniums in the window, now standing before the large mirror in the wardrobe smoothing her white cheeks, brushing back the curls from her damp forehead and studying her eyes that appeared to have grown suddenly larger. She would smile pityingly as she looked and laughingly whispered to the image that mocked her every movement. "He doesn't love you! How could he? He doesn't! He says that he does, but he really doesn't!"

And then she would wander back to the little desk and turn over the envelopes addressed to Margaret in the writing that she knew quite as well as her own.

But when Margaret went home that night Dorothy was like her old self. There was a bright spot on either cheek, and Margaret thought she had never seen Dorothy look sweeter. After dinner they sat down before the fire, Dorothy with her head in Margaret's lap and Margaret's arms round her. They talked over every happy hour they had spent together. And when the time came to say good-night, and Dorothy had kissed Margaret as was her custom, Margaret puzzled over the tear that had fallen on her hand.

Dorothy had planned it all that afternoon. Three powders, Dr. Hall had said, would cause the death of a ten year old child, and she had all the powders that he had left with her—there were ten at least. He had cautioned her so carefully, for the medicine was very strong, and an overdose would surely prove fatal. Yes, she felt that she was wicked. Jack loved Margaret. He didn't love her, with her plain face and moody ways. It was Margaret. How could she have been so blind? He knew that she, Dorothy, loved him, so he said all those pretty things to comfort her.

She slipped into the pink eiderdown gown that Jack so admired. She did her hair after the fashion that he professed to have liked best. Mechanically she folded and put away all the stray garments that were lying about the room. From her glove box she took a package that contained several folded bits of paper. Her gloves! They had never looked so pretty before. Her fan, too—but then Margaret could use it.

How her temples throbbed! What made her choke so? Her hands were damp and her heart seemed bursting with grief. Oh, yes, she had almost forgotten. She must say her prayers—she had never neglected them—so she knelt down beside the white bed. For some reason she couldn't frame the words. She could get as far as "Thy Kingdom come," and then she would seem to forget and would mutter:

"Dear old Jack! When I am dead you can marry Margaret and forget all about silly Dorothy. I would not love you if I could help it, and I don't want you to love me because you are sorry for me."

At last she arose. How cramped her limbs were. There were the powders. Taking the cover of her porcelain powder-box, she emptied the contents of all the white papers in it. Her hands trembled when she raised it to her lips, but she grew strong, and in a moment was staring vacantly at the little cover with its feathery coating of powder. The bed seemed so far away. She tottered towards it. How soft the pillows felt! She was sleepy, too. What sweet music she heard, and who had brought all the flowers that were floating through the air?

There was an odour of jasmine—Jack was so fond of Jasmine. Jack! Why, there was Jack! Dear Jack! He did love her after all. It wasn't Margaret at all. If she could only run her fingers through his hair, but somehow she couldn't move her hands. Ah! Jack came closer then. Yes, yes, it was really Jack. She felt his warm breath against her cheeks, but she couldn't see him any more. Everything was so blue and dark. And as Jack's lips met hers, he knew that never now could she be his wife.

MADGE MORRIS.

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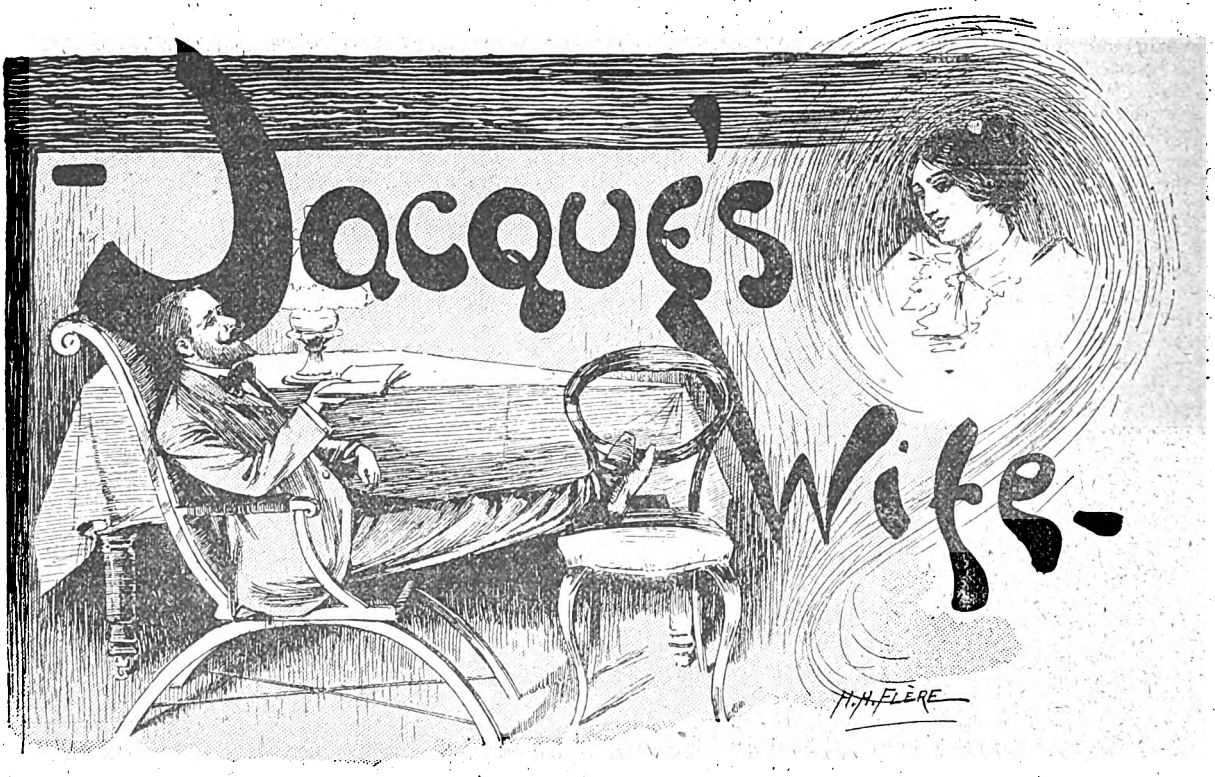

Dismissing his servant for the night, Jacque shut himself up in his library, where a clear wood-fire was burning briskly, and, slightly lowering the flame of the lamp, he was soon absorbed in a book.

The little clock on the mantel struck ten silvery strokes, and in the silence that followed, the ringing of the street bell sounded shrilly through the apartment. As he was not expecting anyone, he did not stir. A second peal sounded, and this time he arose and, taking the lamp, went to open the door.

A dark form awaited him in the vestibule. In the light thrown sharply out by the lamp-shade, Jacque recognised his wife.

"You!" he stammered.

She did not move, she did not speak, but stood silently waiting.

Above them opened the shaft of the stairway, down which the single jet of gas cast a softened light, as of dusk. The sound of voices ascended to them from a lower floor.

"Come inside," he said.

He led the way to the library and made her sit down in an easy-chair, and then they looked at one another. It was five years since he had seen her. One evening she had left him; coming home, he had found the house empty, with a note on the table—two lines of farewell hurriedly scrawled in pencil.

Now, after five years of absence, she had come back, she was there opposite him, handsome still, but with an intangible suggestion of extinguishment, of dejection, of being faded, revealed in her air of weariness and suffering. She was dressed in a simple black gown, so worn that it shone at the elbows, and the seams were white. A strand of silver showed among the brown tresses on her brow. It seemed to Jacque as if something within him were sealed up, dead, for he was not at all moved.

Then, as he did not question her, she told him in a few words, without pretence of shame, that, abandoned in her turn, she had been alone since the evening before, that she had spent the entire day crying. She had eaten nothing, had gone out in the evening, wandered aimlessly about, found herself at his door, and had come in.

Still he said nothing, and in the chill silence five years of their life passed before their mental vision, his five years for him, and her five years for her.

When she had left him, when he had found the house empty, it had been the destruction of all his joys, the shattering of his happy life; he had thought he could never recover from the blow, and he had lived on like a broken thing, feeling his reason totter. That had lasted six months—a year. No news of her had come to him, and the hope that kept vigil in the ruins of his home died, too. Then he had ceased to think, had let himself drift like a wreck, like a lost thing. His home, a luxurious little nest, had redeemed him: he had been recalled to himself by being in his accustomed rooms, surrounded by familiar furniture; forgetfulness had come to him as it comes after all great griefs, as it comes at the end of all things, and Jacque had settled down to the even, satisfied life of an old bachelor.

She who had deserted him to run after what is thought to be happiness, had imagined herself happy, a queen, for six months, a year, just the time he had spent in lamenting and suffering. But the awakening had been terrible. Her passion satiated, she had judged in cold blood the man she had chosen, for whom she had

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broken all restraints, braved the conventions of the world, and denied her vows. He was small, mean, not to be compared with her husband, and the life of which she had serenely dreamed, a life of joy and unalloyed delight, had become her crucifix.

For five years, tied to that man, she had tasted drop by drop the bitterness of that loveless, faithless, sunless life, until the day when she knew the desolate despair of dead passions. Then money had been lacking, chilling misery had come, and the bond had worn till it broke. In her turn she had found herself abandoned, weeping in misery and alone.

And now life had brought together again this husband and this wife. He grew stout, commonplace comfortable; she weary, conquered, miserable.

In the silence between them, the noises of the street below sounded distinctly in the room. A cab rattled by, a shopman put up his shutters, a passer-by coughed, and the sound re-echoed in the distance. Jacque moved his keys in his pocket, and their sudden jingling roused him. He recalled his wife's last words.

"You are hungry," he said and he went to the kitchen.

There was some soup still warm, and the remains of a chicken, which he brought in. He served her on one corner of the table, where he spread a napkin, and as she ate, he made another trip to the kitchen and brought back a bottle of wine, from which he filled her glass.

He watched her eat now, saw the colour return to her cheeks, and her hunger satisfied, a sense of content gradually pervade her whole being. When she had finished, they began to talk.

"I have met you twice," she said, almost at ease under the influence of food and warmth. "The first time was three years ago, in a shop. You passed so near, you brushed against me. I turned pale as that napkin, but you went on without seeing me."

He seemed surprised.

"The other time," she continued, "I think you did see me. It was raining, and I was waiting for an omnibus. You came along, and I immediately hurried off, but you followed me. I walked very quickly, but I could hear your steps behind me. Then you lost track of me, for I looked back and you were no longer there."

He did not recall the incident; he was quite sure he had never seen her.

She went on to tell him that she lived quite near by in the same quarter; and he was astonished that, living so near her, he had been entirely unaware of her existence.

Now she settled back cosily in the chair, feeling relaxed, grown tender. She found this armchair just as she had known it before; she found all the things about her in their old places. Nothing was changed; the hangings were the same, the furniture, the ornaments—all had a friendly air, an air of welcome. It was good to be in this home, of which she was taking possession again after five years' absence. For did not this dinner on the corner of the table attest their reconciliation? The lamp on the table was the same that had lighted them when they kissed each other in the old days. It was all at an end now—that equivocal existence, the misery and disgust of those five years of slavery. She would resume her place in her home beside the husband who forgave her; she would make many happy days for herself after this leaf which was torn from her life.

"You!" he stammered.

Jacque considered her calmly, without anger and without tenderness. There came to his lips no words of pity. The woman seated there was an entire stranger to him. The other woman, she whom he had loved, the wife, no longer existed; his love was dead, and it seemed to him he could feel its ashes under his restless fingers.

Without a word he went into another room, and returned with a piece of paper—a bank-note for one hundred francs — which he handed to her.

"You have need of money," he said, "and if you should be in want again, pray let me know."

He took up the lamp and waited for her to rise. As one in a dream, she looked at him, followed him. At the door, as he opened it, she comprehended that her dream was ended, that he was sending her away, that she should return to the black street, to her cold, bare lodging, that he was implacable.

Her eyes implored him. Jacque opened the door as if he did not see her. When she was in the vestibule he held his lamp aloft, flooding her with light, as when she entered, and repeated in a calm voice that seemed to have a casual gentleness in it:

"When you are in need, pray let me know."

And the door was closed upon her. In the silence he heard her tottering steps descend the stair.

Louis de Robert.

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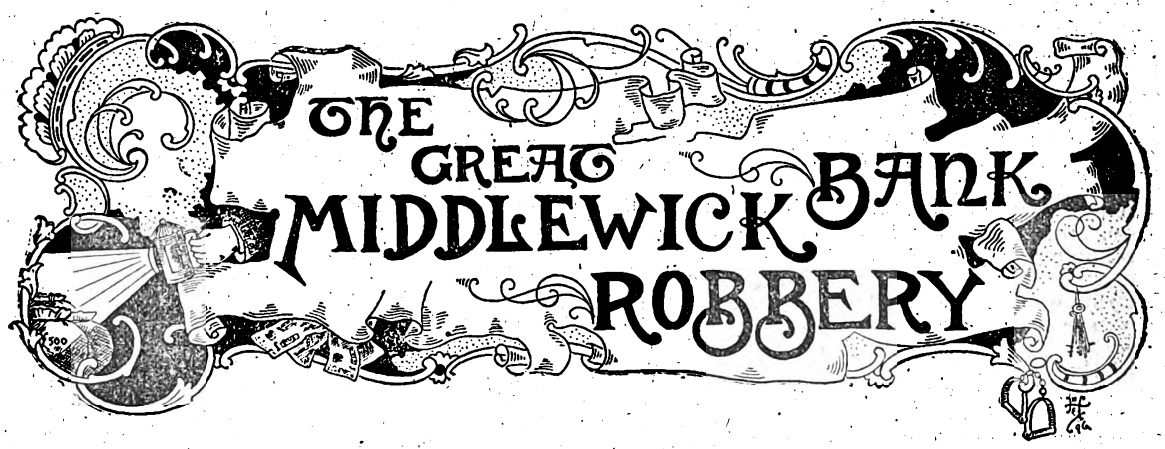

CHAPTER XXII.

THE next morning, after a hearty breakfast, Burton went round to the hotel where he knew Taylor to be anxiously awaiting him. When the door was locked and the two were alone, Burton asked:

"Have you any news to communicate?"

"No, I spent the evening, or rather a part of it, in completing my preparations for leaving Middlewick."

"Yes, we are both off to-day, having finished the saddest task either of us ever performed."

"I strolled past 'Glenmora,' also Rutherford's place, last night, but think both he and Mr. Bryant were out."

"Yes."

"I am waiting, Phil, for the particulars."

Thereupon Jack Burton, beginning at the point when he assumed the character of an innocent, unsuspecting farmer driving homeward with a miserable animal, related everything that had taken place while he was playing that part.

"There is the whole story," he concluded, "and the question is what is the next thing to be done?"

"Our work was to discover who stole the twenty thousand pounds, and that has been done. The episode of the four burglars has resulted badly—that is, for them. Since they are disposed of, they need no further consideration."

"Yes, that is so."

"The money having been recovered, all that remains is to restore it to the bank."

"But how? Suppose you or I go down there and hand the package to Mr. Bryant, what sort of story shall we give by way of explanation?"

"Simply that we have succeeded in recovering the funds but we cannot give particulars."

"That course was so direct that it is the one which instantly occurred to me, but fatal objections are in the way."

"Why not tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?"

"That is, I know, usually considered the safest plan, but there are exceptions, and this is one of them. Reflect, and you will see the consequences are likely to be of the gravest character."

There was silence between the two men for a few minutes, and then Burton said:

"The first thing, I think, is for one of us to go and see Mr. Bryant at his private house. You came here in response to his request for a detective. He has known you as such all the way through. I simply play the part of watchman to the bank, and he still looks upon me as nothing more than a watchman. That fact will serve as a barrier between us, and, therefore, I consider you are best suited to interview him, as the utmost confidence must exist between Mr. Bryant and the one who takes the money to him."

"All right, then, it shall be as you wish. The sooner we begin, the sooner will come the finish—come in," in answer to a knock, and quickly unlocking the door. A page boy stood outside with a card, which he handed to Taylor. The latter glanced at it, and telling the lad to wait outside, closed the door again.

"What do you think of *that*," asked Taylor, passing the card to his friend, who read:

"Miss May Denton."

Underneath her name the young lady had written in pencil:

"Must see you at once, on a matter of the utmost importance, otherwise I should not take the liberty of calling."

"She'd better come up, I suppose, but what's to become of you meanwhile?" said Taylor.

"I'll wait in my room till she's gone. She hasn't asked to see me, and would probably resent my presence."

That question settled, Taylor instructed the boy to show the visitor up, and Burton went to his own room.

A few minutes later a timid knock sounded at the door, in answer to which the door was thrown open and Miss Denton was ushered in. One glance at her countenance told of the anguish that had prompted so bold a measure. She was pale, and her lips quivered, despite the brave effort she made to repress her agitation.

"There is no danger of our being overheard?" was her first question, when she was seated.

"Not unless we raise our voices, which I hardly think either of us proposes to do."

It was his manner rather than his words which reassured the young lady. She had come with the intention of trusting him fully, as indeed it was important she should do.

"You were surprised to receive my card, Mr. Taylor?"

"Yes, I will not deny that it startled me at first, but I may say that when I came to think things over my surprise passed away. I expected to hear from you to-day."

"Yes, but hardly in the shape of a reception here."

"Perhaps not, but reflection again showed me the best of reasons for that request. I would have been glad to have called at your house, but you could not have guaranteed that we should be wholly alone there, there is no certainty of privacy in the parlour of an hotel, and it was imperative you should see me alone, so this is the only place—that surely is sufficient explanation."

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"May I ask," he added, "before you tell me your errand, whether you are prepared to trust me fully?"

"Quite."

"Thank you. Be assured that that confidence shall be respected to the last degree."

"Do you know my errand?"

"Yes, and if it is any encouragement, let me further assure you that I know *all*."

She looked him in the face, and in a low tremulous voice, hardly above a whisper, said:

"Then I come to plead for mercy."

CHAPTER XXIII.

NOTHING could have exceed the gentle courtesy and delicate consideration which the detective showed towards Miss Denton during this most painful interview. To convince her that he was truthful in declaring that he knew all, as he had asserted, he told everything that he had learned concerning the robbery of the Middlewick Bank.

Then when she began to plead for mercy, he raised his hand in protest:

"Say no more, Miss Denton."

"Oh, how shall I ever thank you," she exclaimed, her face aglow with happiness, "I shall bless you as long as I live. Can it be true, or am I dreaming?"

He repeated his assurances, and a few minutes later escorted her downstairs, saying, as he bade her good-bye, that he would call upon her uncle later in the afternoon.

"And now," he asked, as he rejoined Jack Burton and related what had passed, "shall it be you or I who will visit 'Glenmora'?"

"You are the man."

"As you think best. You will stay in Middlewick until the thing is through?"

"Yes, I may be needed, but I doubt whether Bryant will care to meet me when he knows all."

At the hour named by the banker, in response to Taylor's request for a private interview, the detective presented himself at the door of "Glenmora." The banker himself received him in the hall and led the way to the library, after having given instructions that under no pretext was he to be disturbed.

Taylor's experienced eye was quick to note the pale face and nervous manner of his host. He could not help knowing the subject which was to form the theme of the conversation, but it was impossible to conjecture all that was coming. Nothing was to be gained by circumlocution, and after the briefest preliminaries, the visitor came to the point:

"Mr. Bryant, as you are aware, less than a week has passed since the robbery of the Middlewick Bank. Twenty thousand pounds was taken from its vault, and carried away by someone whom it is evident knew the combination by which the lock was opened. That much you told me yourself, but had you so willed you could have told me more, for you and I both know only too well who that man was. When you saw the twenty thousand pounds placed in the vault of the Bank your temptation came, you who had scarcely ever entertained the thought of dishonesty now decided to steal that money; it was the supreme crisis of your life, and you fell.

"But with all the facilities at your command for doing this great wrong you saw the necessity of preventing suspicion, you displayed the cunning of the most accomplished scoundrel that is now serving time in any gaol."

There was no mistaking this language, but Mr. Bryant compressed his lips and nodded his head, saying:

"Very true."

"You had every facility," I say, "but even then it would not do for you to blunder at any point. The watchman, John Warren, was incorruptibly honest; even if he were not, you wanted no partner in crime, for a partner would compel a division of the plunder, and that did not suit your ideas.

"For years Warren has been troubled with rheumatism, and, as he admitted, has been accustomed to sleep away part of his nights on duty. But he was liable to awake, and it would not do for you to be seen, even though he had no right to question your actions. So you gave him a bottle of medicine for his rheumatism, with instructions to take it early in the evening. He did so: it contained a drug which forced him to sleep like a log for ten hours——"

"How do you know that?" interrupted Mr. Bryant, starting with alarm. "It is true, but how did you find it out?"

Easily enough. The fact that the man slept so soundly was suspicious and he was questioned. He still had the remainder of the medicine you so kindly gave him. Its odour betrayed the presence of laudanum. He had no suspicion, nor will he ever have, of the trick played on him."

"Where's the bottle now?"

"Smashed to fragments and the contents gone."

"Thanks—thanks for doing that."

"It is not I who did it, but another. One of the truest friends you ever had. He managed it so well that Warren will never have room for an inkling of the truth."

"But who is this man—this friend, as you call him?"

"One moment. Having disposed of Warren, you went to the Bank at midnight, opened the outer door with your own key, did the same to the vault, took out the money and went home.

"In order to more effectually throw dust into the eyes of others, you applied to Mr. Philip Cairns, Chief of the National Detective Agency, for help in tracing the burglars and recovering the funds. You supposed he sent but one detective here—myself—when he really sent a couple."

"Who was the second?" asked the astonished man.

"He came to you as Jack Burton, highly recommended by a banker friend of yours, so highly recommended indeed that you engaged him off-hand as watchman."

"And *he* is a detective," repeated the amazed host.

"Rather," replied Taylor with a smile, "and a pretty good one too, for he is Philip Cairns himself."

Mr. Bryant started, as well he might, at this announcement, for no suspicion of Jack Burton had ever entered his mind.

Taylor paused a moment, that the full effect of his words might not be lost, and then he proceeded:

"Philip Cairns is my superior in every respect, and he had not been down here very long when he suspected the truth, *i.e.*, that only one person was concerned in the robbery of the Middlewick Bank, and that that person was its trusted Manager. It was one thing, however, to suspect, another to prove, and to establish that suspicion became his special work and province."

"What first directed suspicion to me?" asked the host, growing interested in the narrative, despite himself.

"Several things. The first, perhaps, resulted from the fact that you were one of the two to whom the secret of the safe combination was known, although, indeed, it was quite probable that Rutherford had discovered it for himself.

"A study of those three individuals led us, at first, to suspect your book-keeper, but Mr. Cairns was not fully satisfied. I may say that when you first called on the new watchman, I was with him, and hid in the cupboard. We were in the front of the building when we saw the white gleam of the letter as it was pushed under the door, Cairns hurriedly opened the door and told me to follow the person whose stealthy footsteps we plainly heard. I tried to do so, but was a minute too late."

"Do you know who that man was?" asked the Bank Manager with a grim smile.

"Yes, I am talking to him now. Neither of us saw you, but although you ran very quickly for a man of your years, your new 'watchman' afterwards learnt your identity.

"Once we suspected that Rutherford was associated with you in the crime, but that letter convinced us of our error. In the first place you began to grow uneasy over the fact

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that the services of a detective had been solicited by you. You proposed the compromise, hoping you could bring it about and secure the majority of the plunder without further danger to yourself, but it is fortunate for you, Mr. Bryant, that your proposition was not acted upon. The discovery of your guilt would have followed, and have become known to the whole community. It was for that reason that Mr. Cairns suppressed it; but he thought you were too good a man to have your life spoiled by a moment's weakness."

"Great Heavens! Why should he think that?"

"You will recall that I came here some days ago with the request for a specimen of Rutherford's handwriting. You gave it to me, but it was really a sample of your penmanship that I was instructed to obtain."

"I never dreamed that you had any purpose in asking for that draft of my letter."

"That obtained, Mr. Cairns and myself sat down and made a careful study and comparison of the two, and the disguised hand in the obviously mis-spelled missive that was pushed under the door of the bank. The conclusion that I reached was that Rutherford wrote the proposition, ostensibly coming from the burglars; I observed many similarities between the two.

"Mr. Cairns, however, formed another opinion, from which he could not be moved. He admitted the resemblance I pointed out, but proved that you laboriously made them for the very purposes of misleading experts in handwriting into the belief that it was written by your book-keeper, anticipating as you did the test to which it was subjected. *That*, Mr. Bryant, is the one act connected with this affair for which I can find neither palliation nor excuse, for it has none."

The Manager leaned his head upon his hand and groaned.

"But the very two who would have suffered most, had your plan succeeded," went on the detective, in cold, even tones, "are they who, knowing the truth, are most anxious to shield you. Your niece was more observant than you suspected. She attributed your strange conduct after the robbery to something more than worry over the loss of the funds."

"Rutherford was convinced," continued the detective, "that you would visit the hiding place of the money, whether you intended to return it or not. He followed and saw you when you halted by the rock with the intention of satisfying yourself that the packet was where you had placed it. Unfortunately, however, his interest became so absorbed that he betrayed himself. In answer to your angry threats he met you calmly and began an earnest expostulation and plea. Finally he exacted your solemn pledge to return the funds, and went home in the early dusk of last night."

"But," faltered Mr. Bryant, "when did he tell you this?"

"Neither Mr. Cairns nor I have exchanged a word with him. There was a third person who witnessed your interview. He dared not draw near enough to overhear what was said, but it was easy for him to judge from your actions what passed between you."

"With so splendid a chance before you, you were still weak, and for some little time after Rutherford left you, you stood irresolute."

"You are not precisely right," said the banker with a sigh. "When you saw me hesitate, it was not because I faltered in my promise to return the money to the bank, but rather was I trying to decide how to do it and still keep the truth hidden from others."

"I am glad to hear that, and I may say it was not I, but Philip Cairns, who was the third person present. When at last you stooped down to remove the notes, you found——"

"*They were gone!*" broke in Mr. Bryant, jumping from his chair and pacing up and down the library, overcome by excitement. "Yes, they had been taken by someone else, and now it is obviously beyond recovery."

"Stop, stop! This is too grave a matter for trifling; hear me through, I beg of you. After you left the opening in the woods, with Rutherford, Cairns, who was hidden among the trees, and who read aright the meaning of your action, went to the rock and drew out the package of notes intact——"

"WHAT!"

"It is as I tell you," interposed the detective, motioning him back to his seat.

Taylor slipped his hand into his breast-pocket. At this question he drew it out and tossed the package over to the banker. "There it is; not a penny missing. Gracious, man! Don't faint."

With a perceptible effort, Mr. Bryant regained his self-control, and said:

"But—Mr. Taylor—how—shall I explain the return of the money?"

"Tell the directors that the detectives secured it, but will give no further information. I presume they are like the average bank directors, and will be so pleased at the recovery of the funds that they will care little about bringing the criminals to justice, especially as they will save a goodly sum by not making the attempt.

"Our firm will send you an account for the services of Mr. Cairns and myself, so good-bye."

With a hearty handshake the two men parted, and so ends the great mystery of the Middlewick Bank.

THE END.

A BRILLIANT SUCCESS.

A VERY successful *Melody* concert, in connection with the new Musical Magazine, was given on Saturday at St. James's Hall, the most interesting feature, perhaps, being the presence of the distinguished French composers, Gabriel Fauré and Gabriel Pierné, both of whom conducted their own works, for which a special orchestra, under the leadership of Mr. Arthur Bent, had been engaged.

The vocalists comprised Miss Esther Palliser, who sang in her usual finished manner Godard's "Hour of Love," Fauré's "Notre Amour," and Weber's "Softly Sighs." Mdlle. Landi's fine voice showed to perfection in Fauré's "Chanson du Pêcheur" and "Les Roses d'Ispahan," and in the second part in Gounod's "Mignon." Mr. Edward Lloyd enchanted everybody, and was encored in Godard's "Angels Guard Thee" and F. Clay's "Shades of Evening." Mr. David Bispham's cultivated style was heard to advantage in Gounod's devotional song, "Rest in Peace," and Adela Maddison's two songs, "Liebe" and "O, That 'Twere Possible."

M. Johannes Wolff played in his usual masterly manner two pieces by Pierné, "Berceuse" and "Serenade;" Saint-Saëns' "Serenade" and Wieniawski's "Valse," the latter of which received a well-deserved encore, and was responded to with Fauré's "Berceuser."

The first part concluded with a "Pavane" by Fauré, a most graceful and finished composition, in which Miss Esther Palliser, Mdlle. Landi, Mr. David Bispham, and M. Bagès took part.

The orchestra played Sellenick's "Marche Indienne" in a most spirited manner, their other items being Cowen's "Language of Flowers" (three numbers), and Sullivan's Incidental Musical to "Henry VIII." ("Processional March" and "Graceful Dance"). We must not forget to mention two characteristic pieces by Pierné which made a marked impression, the one being "The Vigil of the Guardian Angel," and the other, "March of the Little Tin Soldiers," the latter of which is sure to achieve popularity, and which appeared in Number Two of *Melody*.

The majority of the songs and instrumental pieces rendered at this concert will be found in the numbers of *Melody* already published. *Melody* appears on the first of every month, price Sixpence nett, and its contents consist of a variety of delightful pieces for the piano, violin, mandoline, and other instruments, besides various songs by eminent composers.

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THE TALE OF A CAT.

When I first met George Herne he impressed me as being a remarkable man. He was well educated, even learned, yet in conversation he imparted his knowledge without a suspicion of pedantry. He was an omnivorous reader, was ever ready to converse on any subject that came up, and his conversation was brilliant. Withal he was a good fellow. I never met a man that took such complete possession of me on so short an acquaintanceship. When I had met him half-a-dozen times I counted him among my best friends.

Most men that are graduates of two universities and have improved their time at each are oppressed with a sense of their own erudition, and are anything but good comrades. Not so with George Herne. Though he had made the most of his time at Oxford and afterwards at Heidelberg, and at the latter university had dipped deep into German philosophy, his intellectual training had not caused him to lose the faculty of enjoying life, nor the power of contributing to its enjoyment by others. Among men of the world he was a man of the world, and a delightful one; among his friends that chose to draw him out he was an entertaining philosopher. However, his talk was so frequently illuminated with flashes of imagination, that I often thought that he believed, with Hamlet, that there were more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in his philosophy.

I had known him less than a year when one day, while strolling along Piccadilly, I encountered him as he was leaving his club.

"Come," he said, putting his arm in mine, "let us go for a walk in Regent's Park. It is a beautiful afternoon and everybody will be there."

I acquiesced. When we reached the Zoo, we paused for a few minutes to look at the animals, in which my friend seemed to take a great deal of interest.

"Do you know," he said, "I never look at animals without thinking of the doctrine of metempsychosis, and wondering whether or not their bodies contain souls that once inhabited human forms. Oh, you needn't laugh," he added, in answer to the smile I could not suppress. "Look at that camel's face. See its expression now. Is it not like your friend Jameson's?"

I had to admit it was like Jameson's.

"Well, why may not the soul of one of Jameson's ancestors be in that camel?" he continued. "And then look at the monkeys. Are not their faces grotesquely human?"

I agreed with him as to the monkeys, but said that they did not convert me to a belief in the doctrine of metempsychosis.

"Well," said my friend musingly, "I confess that I am a good deal interested in the doctrine, notwithstanding the poor repute in which it is now held. It has always had an extraordinary fascination for me. I could tell you of a strange adventure into which I was led through my interest in it."

"Tell me," I said. I began to be interested in this new phase of my friend's character, for he had never before spoken to me in this strain.

As we continued to stroll northwards in the park he related his adventure.

"One afternoon," he said, "I had been poring over some old books and indulging in speculations in regard to the transmigration of souls until my brain was in a whirl. I tried to dismiss the subject from my thoughts, but in vain. To get rid of the confusion of ideas that was making a maelstrom of my mind, I started in the evening for a walk along the Embankment.

"The moon, which was full, was coming up, and its light gradually brought into relief the objects about me. Even the shapes of the hieroglyphics on the obelisk were distinctly outlined. Of course, Cleopatra's Needle turned my thoughts to Cleopatra. I wondered if the soul of the fair Egyptian still haunted the earth, and if so, whether or not she ever came to look at this monolith, so long associated with her name. I wondered in what form she now appeared. Had her soul, I asked myself, suffered transmigration into an animal of a lower order, or had it been reincarnated in a human body?

"While musing thus my eyes were fixed on one of those great black mythological figures that support the obelisk at its corners and maintain its balance on its pedestal. Suddenly the figure at which I was looking seemed to move, and to spring from the pedestal, alighting on one of the stone flags only a few feet away from me. I expected to see the obelisk tumble. The figure, however, had not stirred, but a large black cat that had been crouching within its extended claws had jumped down and stood there in the moonlight gazing at me with great flaming eyes. She was the most graceful creature I ever saw. There was neither fear nor anger in those feline eyes, but a strange, fascinating look, that seemed to say, 'Follow me,' as the cat, with an easy movement, went down the Embankment and walked toward Charing Cross. 'It is Cleopatra!' I exclaimed.

"You think the idea absurd," continued Herne, as he caught my look of amused incredulity. "But you would not smile if you could understand the feeling that possessed me at the time. I was as firmly convinced that the cat was Cleopatra as I am that we are sitting here.

"Impelled by an irresistible influence, I followed the cat. Athough she moved faster than I, she paused now and then, and, turning to look at me, waited until I drew near. Then she moved forward again. When she reached Charing Cross she led me off into Leicester Square, and went down one of the streets leading out of it. I followed, keeping the cat in sight. At last she ascended the steps leading to a handsome brown-stone house. She paused, watching me approach her. When I was only a short distance from her she leaped into a little balcony in front of the parlour floor, and entered the house by an open window.

"When I tell you what I then did, perhaps you will say that the cat had hypnotised me. I myself have never been able to account for my action nor for the strange incident to which it led. What I did was to ascend the steps and ring the door-bell. The door was opened by a small copper-coloured, Oriental-looking man in livery. My intent was to inquire about the cat. What I said was: 'Is Cleopatra here?' A peculiar smile flitted across the visage of the servant as he replied that she was. Mechanically I asked if I might see her, and again the servant replied in the affirmative. I was ushered into the parlour, and then the door was closed.

"If some supernatural power had suddenly whisked me through the air and dropped me into a house in Cairo

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my surroundings could not have been more Egyptian than they were. Everything in the room, from the furniture and the draperies to the smallest piece of *bric-à-brac*, reminded me of Egypt. To make sure that I was not dreaming I pinched myself. I was awake. Although I was in the room into which the cat had disappeared from the balcony, I could see nothing of her.

"Presently the door opened and a beautiful woman appeared. She looked like a daughter of the Ptolemies. Her natural Egyptian appearance was intensified by her costume, which might have come from one of the bazaars of Alexandria. I stammered an excuse for my presence, relating the incident of the cat, and saying that I had a great desire to know her history, and, if possible, to purchase her. My words surprised the fair Egyptian, who said she had no cat, and had never seen the animal I described. I learned from her that she was known among her acquaintances as Cleopatra, and she said that when I asked for Cleopatra, she supposed I was one of her friends. She told me her real name, and I remember that a friend of mine had spoken to me of her as an interesting and eccentric woman. I made further excuses for my unceremonious visit and retired.

"I afterwards met Cleopatra at a reception, and was formally presented to her. She invited me to call on her, and I have since been a frequent visitor at her house. I confess that I have become deeply interested in her. However, she is a greater mystery to me than ever. She tells me that she supposes she is an Egyptian, though she knows nothing of her parentage. She is supplied with a large income from an unknown source. She has tried to learn whence it comes, but in vain. Two of her servants, a man and a woman, are Egyptians, and have been in attendence on her as long as she can remember. They know, or pretend to know, as little as she in regard to her parentage.

"The cat that was the cause of our meeting is as great a mystery to me as Cleopatra. I have learned from one of the servants that although the cat has never been seen in the house when the mistress was there, she has often appeared when the mistress was absent. The servant accounts for this from the fact that Cleopatra has a great aversion to cats, and says that the cat undoubtedly understands it. But I sometimes think there is more than that in it."

As he said this Herne drew out his watch and, glancing at it, added: "It is nearly time for her to appear."

"Who?" I asked.

"Cleopatra, of course," replied my friend. "She drives in the park every pleasant afternoon, and usually passes about this time. There she is!" he exclaimed, pointing to a handsome equipage.

In the carriage sat a beautiful, dark, low-browed woman, who turned her eyes on Herne, whom she recognised with a gracious bow. As her carriage disappeared amid a hundred others that were dashing up and down the drive, Herne said: "Is she not beautiful?"

"Very beautiful," I replied.

* * * * *

A few days after Herne related his adventures to me I was called from the city and remained away over a month. On the evening following my return I went to his club. Not finding him, I inquired of one of his friends in regard to him. I was astounded with the information that he was in an insane asylum. It was said that he entertained the strange hallucination that he had been engaged to marry a woman in whom the soul of Cleopatra was reincarnated, and that the engagement had been broken off because he accused her of being a witch and transforming herself at times into a black cat that haunted the obelisk on the Embankment.

On the other hand, several of Herne's friends intimate that he was declared to be insane through the instrumentality of relatives who conspired to get control of his property. I know not what to believe. I know that my friend was eccentric, but I never thought him insane. I have begun an investigation of the case, and have learned that everything he told me in regard to the woman he calls Cleopatra is true. I shall continue the investigation, and if I am convinced that Herne is unjustly detained, I shall do everything in my power to restore him to freedom. Still, I know not what to believe.

ALLEN GOODMAN.

PICTURE ✣ PUZZLE ✣ PRIZE.

No. 6.

£10 TO BE GIVEN AWAY.

On the opposite page is a puzzle picture composed of 88 squares. If these squares be rearranged in a certain order they will form a real picture.

We offer a prize of £10 for the correct solution. In order to give readers in all parts of the United Kingdom as equal a chance as possible, none of the solutions received will be opened until Thursday, May 21st, when all those received will be considered together. In the event of two or more correct solutions being included up to this time, the prize will either be given to the sender of the *neatest* one, or will be divided amongst the correct competitors at the discretion of the Editor. Consolation Prizes will also be awarded.

If no correct solution be received on or before Tuesday, May 26th, 1896, the Ten-Pound Prize will be given to the sender of the solution then to hand which is most nearly correct.

Pictures should be packed flat or folded, not rolled, and the outside wrapper must be marked "August."

N.B.—To make the puzzle more difficult some of the squares have been turned upside down, others sideways.

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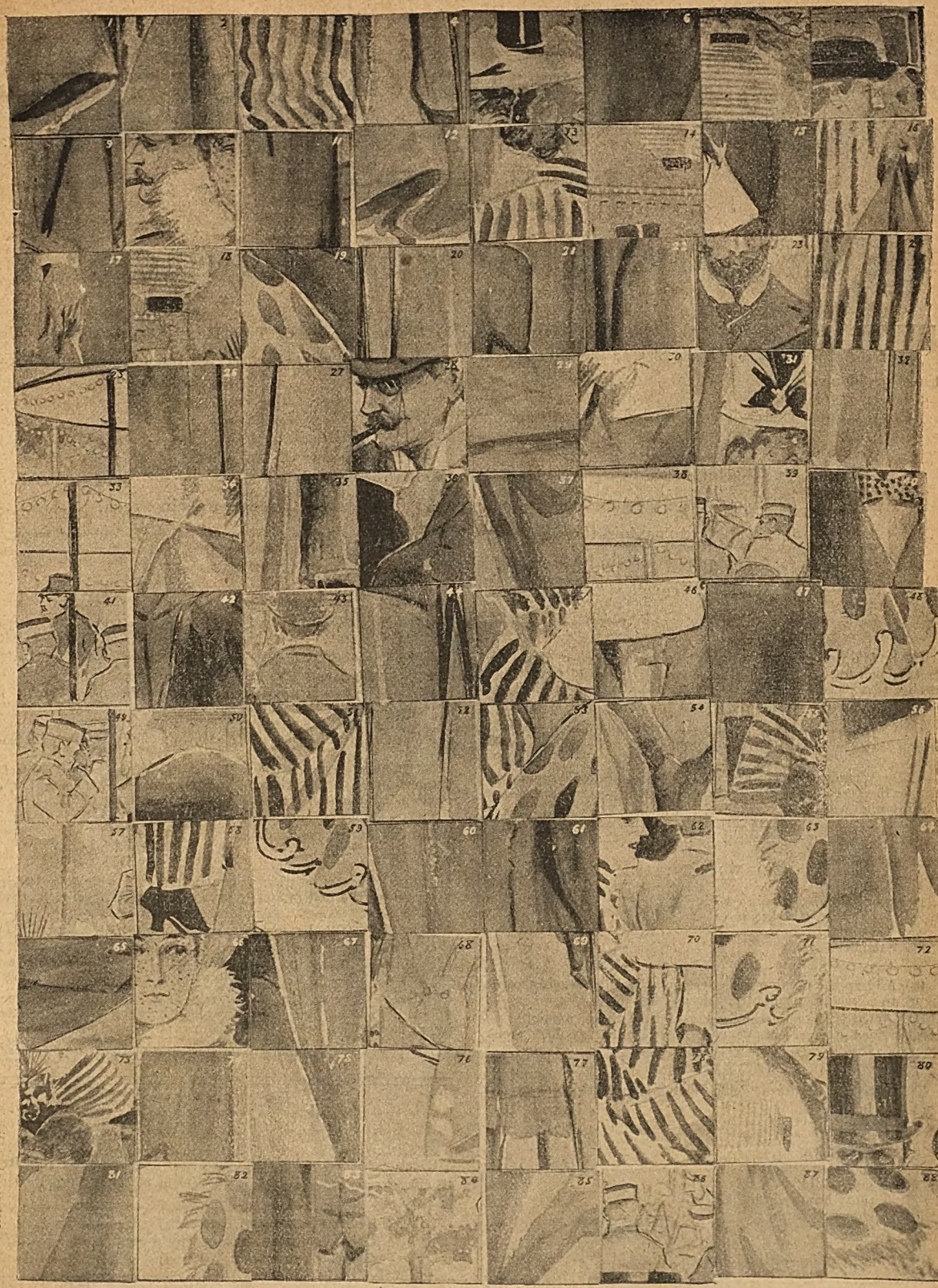

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RULES:

1. All solutions to be written clearly on one sheet of paper.
2. Do not write the questions; simply put the numbers and the answer against each.
3. Each set to contain the £100 coupon (found on second page of cover) for the current week.
4. All attempts to be in by Monday, May 25th.
5. Mark your envelope "GYMNASIUM."

(21.) If a reducing glass, when held at a distance of an inch from a picture, diminishes its size to $\frac{15}{16}$, to what size will it reduce that picture—at the same ratio of reduction—if held at a distance of $8\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

(22.) How many (1) illustrations and (2) photographs are there in the May number of *Pearson's Magazine*.

(23.) When the necessary letters are placed to occupy the dashes in the following lines, the whole will form a sentence containing nine words:

H—R—E—E—T—A—L—F—N—A—O—P—R—U—I—Y
—O—D—S—L—Y—N—T—E—R—E—O—S—

(24.) WORD SQUARE.

1. To bestow.
2. One who competes in running.
3. A family of wingless insects.
4. Vigorous.
5. Salvers.

(25.)

(*a*) Add up the number of figures on this page, each separate figure to count independently, thus: 274 = 13; $\frac{15}{16}$ = 13.

(*b*) What is the monetary value of the whole, assuming the total arrived at represents pence. Thus: Total, say 705; money value £2 18s. 9d.

(26.) ACROSTIC.

The initials of the words defined below signify athletic exercises.

1. A luminant.
2. Besides.
3. Middle.
4. A negative.
5. A fool.
6. A male child.
7. Twenty hundredweight.
8. A chemical term.
9. A fish.
10. To turf.

Each word consists of three letters.

(27.) CHARADE.

My first is to chatter.
My second is an implement for catching fish.
My third is an expression of surprise.
My fourth is a gas measurer.
My whole is an instrument to ascertain the force of magnetism.

(28.) The letters of the following anagrams when correctly transposed spell the titles of articles in the May number of *Pearson's Magazine*.

1. I weld some tools.
2. Her hat is fun, Fred.
3. Her tail.

(29.) Discover on this page those words which by taking away either the first or last letter will have their meaning entirely changed.

Examples: (S)unbrowned, (s)lumber, son(g).

(30.) The following sentence when reconstructed forms a sentence to be found in the May number of *Pearson's Magazine*.

Africa to urging for us the regions of expeditions let such undesirable advantages turn the unhealthy upon emigration have to our most attention with neighbours and done of ever, our.

The punctuation marks are in their correct relative positions.

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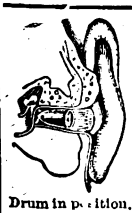

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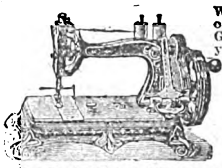
£20 See Illus. Guide and Catalogue (350 pages), 3d. "How to Open a Cigar Store, from £20 to £2,000." TOBACCONISTS' OUTFITTING CO., 183, Euston Road, London. (Over 50 years' reputation.) Manager, H. MYERS.

ATLAS LOCKSTITCH MACHINE.



Works by hand or treadle. Guaranteed 4 years. Equal in quality and size to any machine. To ensure satisfaction, we will send machine on receipt of 5/- P.O. for ONE MONTH'S TRIAL. Balance can be paid 5/- Monthly. Call or write for designs and Samples of work. **39/-**

THE ATLAS SEWING MACHINE CO., **183,** High St., Camden Town, London, N.W.; **63,** Seven Sisters Rd., N.; 14, High Rd., Kilburn.

A LOVELY FIGURE

with **full natural perfect Bust,** obtained by a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment, approved and recommended by the medical profession. Success guaranteed. For particulars free, send stamped envelope in confidence to Madame "B. J." Oriental Toilet Co., 87, Strand, London.

HAIR DESTROYED.

A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs. "T. D.," 97, Strand, London.

AJAX CYCLES FOR LADIES & GENTLEMEN

ARE RICH VALUE. 25 to 30 per cent. saved and carriage paid.

IMMENSE STOCK, NEW AND SECOND HAND.

Easy Terms from 10s. per Month. Lists free.

Now Open.—LARGE CYCLING SCHOOLS at LONDON and LIVERPOOL. Addresses—

BRITISH CYCLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY,

42, High Street, Camden Town, London, N.W., and 45, Everton Road, Liverpool.

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GIVEN AWAY £5,000!

GRAHAM & CO.'S

MONSTER GIFTS.

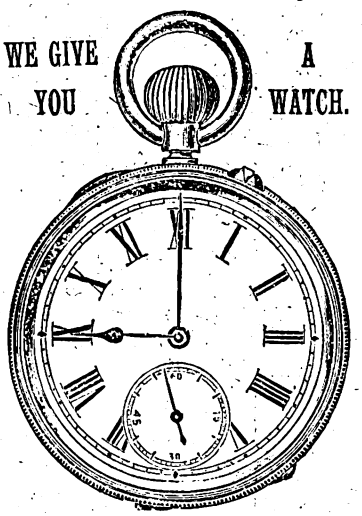
IMPORTANT NOTICE.—Messrs. GRAHAM & CO. intend to present their Customers with a Monster Parcel as a means of advertising their celebrated

EGYPTIAN GOLD JEWELLERY.

For the small sum of **6s. 6d.** we will send as follows:—

NOT A TOY

WE GIVE YOU A WATCH.



	Our Price.
One Gent's Egyptian Gold Albert, or one Lady's Egyptian Gold Albert	2s. 6d.
One Seal or Locket for Chain	1s. 6d.
One Gent's Carbon Diamond Ring, or one Lady's 5-stone Diamond Ring	3s. 6d.
One Gent's Carbon Diamond Scarfpin, or one Lady's Fashionable Brooch	2s. 6d.
One Pair of Cuff Links, or one Carbon Diamond Bracelet ...	2s. 6d.
Total	12s. 6d.

FOR **6s. 6d.**

In addition to the above Every Purchaser will be Presented Free of Charge with one of our handsome

KEYLESS WATCHES.

USUALLY SOLD AT HALF-A-GUINEA.

Read what is said by those who have purchased.

WANTS A SECOND PARCEL.

Lowick-by-Aleale, Northumberland, August 17.

GENTLEMEN,—Received to-day your second parcel of jewellery, with which we are immensely pleased. We really wonder how you can do it. The watch itself is worth more than the money charged for the whole. Many thanks for punctuality.—Very truly yours, WILLIAM McISAAC.

GOES BETTER THAN HIS £15 WATCH.

11, North Street, St. Peters, Tunbridge Wells.

GENTLEMEN,—Some few weeks ago I sent to your firm for the jewellery and advertised watch, of which I am surprised; the *watch* is a beautiful timist. I must admit, in fact, it goes better than my £15 gold watch; and for the jewellery it is astonishing value. I think you must lose money over such gifts, as I term it. The watch alone is worth double the 7s. I enclosed. I have shown it to several of my friends, and they were astonished. You can add this to your testimonials if it will be of any service.—I am, Gentlemen, yours faithfully, LEWIS C. RHODES.

GUARANTEED TO KEEP CORRECT TIME.

Any Watch not received in going order will be exchanged.

Every Watch is Carefully Examined, Timed, and Guaranteed a Correct Timekeeper. Call and see them.

We do this to save the enormous cost of advertising, preferring to give our customers the benefit. As we lose money on each parcel we cannot supply more than two parcels to one person. If you cannot call get a P.O. at once, and send for this wonderful parcel. Orders will be executed in Rotation. **MONEY RETURNED IF NOT AS REPRESENTED.**

NOTE.—The entire parcel will be sent for 6s. 6d. (post free, registered, 7s.). Each customer will receive gratis one of our HANDSOMELY ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUES. Be sure and call or send to-day for the

6s. 6d. Monster Presentation Parcel including the Handsome Keyless Watch.

S. S. GRAHAM & CO., 277, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.

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A POWERFUL NEW SERIAL HAS JUST COMMENCED.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 387. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 30TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

1896 PROCLAMATION.

Grand Pioneer Reduction Sale

By Messrs. F. HODGSON & SON, The Well-known Carpet Manufacturers of the City of Leeds, will take effect on sight of this advertisement.

OUR NEW VENTURE! Yes, Two Different Pattern Hearthrugs or Carpets for the Price of One! (Copyright).

Whereas, in launching forth our New Production, THE "PRUDENTIAL" CARPETS AND HEARTHRUGS, we beg to state they will have a Rich Turkish and Persian Design on one side, and on the reverse the elegant and costly designs of Wilton make. The advantage thus gained is great, as they can be utilised in various rooms at one cost. This is a valuable step in economy.

PRODIGIOUS SALE OF THE

"PRUDENTIAL" Reversible CARPETS

(Registered.)

Reversible, with a different pattern on both sides, woven throughout with handsome border to correspond; richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. Made in 10 sizes only. These carpets are the production of much care, labour, and forethought, and are made in handsome and elaborate patterns (which are protected by registration). They combine the rich blended colours of the Turkish and Persian with the elegant designs of the Wilton. These goods cannot be distinguished from real Brussels when laid down, and cannot be excelled in durability.

	Each.		Each.
6ft. by 9ft., Reduced Sale Price	4/9	9ft. by 15ft., Reduced Sale Price	12/6
7½ft. by 9ft. ,, ,, ,,	5/11	12ft. by 12ft. ,, ,, ,,	12/9
9ft. by 9ft. ,, ,, ,,	7/6	12ft. by 13½ft. ,, ,, ,,	14/6
9ft. by 10½ft. ,, ,, ,,	8/6	12ft. by 15ft. ,, ,, ,,	15/9
9ft. by 12ft. ,, ,, ,,	9/6	12ft. by 18ft. ,, ,, ,,	19/6
10½ft. by 12ft. ,, ,, ,,	11/6	12ft. by 21ft. ,, ,, ,,	22/6

When ordering please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

"Neal Lodge, Upper Norwood, S.E., January 18th., 1896.
The Dowr. Lady Abercromby is pleased with the 'Prudential' Carpets she ordered."

Blairquhan, Maybole, N.B., August 3rd.
Lady Hunter Blair writes: "Will Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son send her another 'Prudential' Carpet, same as before, crimson and gold, dimensions, 9ft. by 10½ft. Cheque inclosed."

A Reversible "Prudential" Hearthrug (Reg)., to match above Carpets, sent for 1s. 6d. extra, size 2 yards long, and 1 yard wide.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 Hearthrugs for 4s. 3d.; or 6 for 8s.; or 12 for 15s. 6d.

EXTRAORDINARY REDUCTIONS.

100,000 "ALARM" CARPETS

(Registered). **GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.**

Sale Price **2/11** EACH.

This Gigantic Offer is a Special Contract, made with readers of *Short Stories* only. We will forward direct from the looms to any address on receipt of amount, A GENUINE WOVEN, SEAMLESS, REVERSIBLE CARPET, the largest ever sold at the Price.

Suitable for Sitting-room or Bedroom, Bordered and Woven in Art Colours, large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any Middle Profits. Remember these are Woven, not printed, and are made of a material almost equal to Wool. Thousands of these Carpets and Rugs have already been sold at almost double above prices. A Rug sent with Carpet, 10d. extra.

SPECIAL OFFER. 2 Carpets and 2 Rugs ... ... 7s. 3d.

Value unequalled in the Annals of Advertising. As a favour, kindly Examine and Compare these Carpets.

"SHORT STORIES" CARPET COUPON, 30/5/96.

On receipt of this Coupon and P.O.O. or Stamps for amount, we guarantee to send goods as above to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. Cash returned in full if not satisfied.

(Signed) F. HODGSON & SON.

All orders dispatched same day in rotation as they arrive by post. Cheques and P.O.'s payable to

F. HODGSON AND SON, Manufacturers, Importers, and Merchants,

WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.

Telegraphic Address—"Eclipse, Leeds." Telephone No. 948.

MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS

For the Immediate Production of

BOTANIC BEER.

A Nine-gallon Cask of Alcoholic Beer from a Brewery will cost you 10/6, but Eight Gallons of Beer made from

Mason's EXTRACT of HERBS

Can be obtained for 6d., plus a pound or two of Sugar and a little Yeast.

THE FINEST BEVERAGE IN THE WORLD.

Inventors and Manufacturers:

Newball & Mason,

HYSON GREEN WORKS,

Nottingham.

If unable to obtain it in your neighbourhood, send 9 stamps for sample bottle: or samples of both Wine Essence and Extract of Herbs, post free for 15 stamps.

PALATABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR COD LIVER OIL.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM.

(REALLY GENUINE.)

In Patent Air-tight Tins, ½lb., 1s. 6d.; 1lb., 2s.; 2lb., 3s. 6d., including Tin and Postage.

MRS. CONYERS, KILKHAMPTON, STRATTON, N. DEVON.

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"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

Sick Headache, Constipation,

Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion,

Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.

ANNUAL SALE SIX MILLION BOXES.

In Boxes, 9½d., 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

THE

REV. C. HAVERGAL

(Nephew of the late Miss Frances Ridley Havergal)

Writes from 14, Alroy Road, Ansfield, Liverpool: "I can thoroughly endorse the statement of 'A CLERGYMAN,' whose testimony to the efficacy of your WIND PILLS for affections of the STOMACH, BOWELS, and LIVER, appears in *The News*. I shall be happy to recommend your Pills as I have opportunity. By all means publish my communication."

All sufferers from **INDIGESTION, LIVER COMPLAINTS, WIND ON THE STOMACH, COSTIVENESS, SICK HEADACHE, NERVOUS DEBILITY, PALPITATION OF THE HEART, BILIOUSNESS,** etc., should avail themselves of this most excellent medicine.

☞ The **WIND PILLS** being **Purely Vegetable, Tasteless** and **Mild,** and **Tonic** in their action, may be taken with perfect safety by the most delicate of either sex.

Of all Vendors, at 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. Post Free for price, from

PAGE WOODCOCK, Lincoln.

7/6 SALOON GUN WITH 100 BALL CARTRIDGES. 7/6

TAKES BALL, SHOT, AND NOISELESS CARTRIDGES.

This gun is the cheapest in the world. It is not a toy, but a practical well-made **Saloon Gun,** 37½in. long, weight about 4½lb. **100 Birds or Rabbits** can be killed with it at cost of **1/6** only with shot cartridges, or **6/-** per 500. Will penetrate a deal board 1in. at 50 yards. Can also be used in the house as a **Target Rifle.** This gun is fitted with a beautifully finished stock, nickel-plated fittings, etc., etc. **Price 7/6** with **100 Ball Cartridges.** Each gun is tested, regulated, and proved before sent to customer. **The "Union Jack" Pistol** (Registered), with 100 Ball Cartridges, price **4/6,** or pair for **8/-. Block Action Saloon or Garden Guns** (very superior manufacture) with 100 ball cartridges. No. 1 Bore, **12/6**; No. 2 Bore, **13/6**; No. 3 Bore, **15/6.** No. 3 Bore at 15/6 will kill a bird on the wing at 35 to 45 yards. Send for Price Lists of Air Guns, Saloon Guns, sporting novelties and ammunition. If you cannot send to-day, cut this advertisement out, and write some other time. ADDRESS—**W. R. JACKSON,** Wholesale Arms and Ammunition Dealer, **Tottenham, MIDDLESEX.**

(Mention this Paper.)

Send 4 Stamps and receive pair

FOLDING SCISSORS, PATENT PENKNIFE,

and Amusing Novelty Catalogue, post paid.

VARIETY COMPANY, DALSTON, LONDON.

S.S. S.S.

PEARSON'S £100 COUPON.

No. 22

May 30, 1896.

S.S. S.S.

HAIR DESTROYED.

A doctor's widow knows of a simple, inexpensive remedy that permanently destroys the roots, and will forward particulars free to all those afflicted sending stamped envelope. Address Mrs. B. D. WOOD, 4, DUKE STREET, VILLIERS STREET, LONDON, W.

BLUSHING

Permanently cured. A Pamphlet giving sound practical advice and particulars of a successful treatment for a rapid, simple, and inexpensive home cure, forwarded free to all upon receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—Prof. B. L. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

ONE BOX

OF

Dr. Mackenzie's Improved Harmless Arsenic Complexion Wafers

will produce the most lovely complexion that the imagination could desire; clear, fresh, free from blotch, blemish, coarseness, redness, freckles, or pimples. Post free for 1/6.—**S. HARVEY,** 5 Denman St., London Bridge, S.E. Half boxes 2/9. Use **Dr. MACKENZIE'S ARSENICAL TOILET SOAP.** 1s. per Tablet; No. 2 unscented, 6d. per Tablet. **Made from Purest Ingredients and Absolutely Harmless.**

Beware of the many imitations.

HAVE DR. MACKENZIE'S OR NONE.

TRILENE REG'D TABLETS THE ONLY CURE for STOUTNESS Registered by GOVERNMENT Price 2/6

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Readily **Reduce Weight** and **Cure Corpulency Permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to **PRESERVE** both **HEALTH** and **FIGURE** without change of diet. **Reduction begins immediately.**

An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*" Send **2/6** to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**

"KEEPUMDRIE"

WATERPROOF GARMENTS.

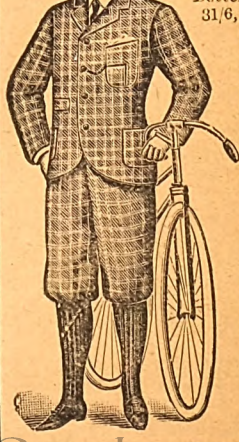
Marvels of Cheapness and Durability.

		FROM
CHESTERFIELD SCARBORO' - -	Men's	7/6
INVERNESS - -	Boys'	5/-

Illustrated list and patterns post free.

ANDREW POTTER, LONDON WORKS, READING.

HIGH-CLASS TAILORING



Every garment cut to measure. DIRECT from the Manufacturer, saving all Middle Profits.

MEN'S SUITS, 18/6

Better Qualities, 22/6, 25/6, 31/6, 37/6, 45/-, 52/6, 63/-.

CYCLING SUITS

From 15/-.

Value Unequalled. Fit Guaranteed.

BOYS' SUITS

Pieces for Mending sent with all Suits.

LADIES' TAILOR-MADE COSTUMES

From 10/6 to 70/-

See our New Patterns before ordering.

It will pay you to do so.

(Hundreds to choose from), Post Free on Application.

All Goods Carriage Paid.

Factory Clothing Company,

Manufacturing and Ladies' Tailors,

117K, ALBION ST., LEEDS.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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SHORT STORIES

Edited by C. Arthur Pearson.

No. 387.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending May 30th, 1896.

THE POTTER'S WHEEL.

"VOILÀ! Jeanne," said M. Damasin, the foreman, "here is your fellow workman. He will keep your clay moist and make the lumps ready for your pretty fingers, and you must teach him yourself how it is done."

The wheel stopped, and Jeanne Carteret glanced up from her task at her future help-mate. Her grey eyes had a preoccupied look, but when they fell upon the quaint figure standing apologetically before her they forthwith danced with merriment. For lo! he was none other than the strange, mystical M. Personne—M. Personne, about whom every tongue in the little village had been wagging for many a day, and who was in himself a veritable enigma.

For in the springtime, when all the world was young and Nature laughed aloud in sheer delight at being there, a stranger strode into the little township of Arranches (which lies, as all the world knows, just across the Swiss frontier under the shadow of the Jura). He was very tall and thin, and though his face was strangely refined and his eyes gentle and luminous, his hair beneath the shabby hat was long and unkempt and his beard was ragged. His clothes he might have exchanged with the first scarecrow to the detriment of the latter. His boots were travel-stained and worn, and he carried in his hand the attenuated valise with which a Frenchman would start to the North Pole; he had evidently walked far and was very weary.

A strange apparition, truly, and one which scarcely recommended itself to mine host of the "Three Squirrels," where, in a singularly soft voice, and with a bow that would have befitted an ambassador, the wanderer requested a bed for a night and some supper. The landlord hesitated, but the casual production of a little bag of golden louis allayed his apprehension, and convinced him that his guest was, after all, one of those strange people with whom the outward evidences of respectability carry little weight. So the enigmatical stranger found shelter.

Not for one night only, but for many days he continued to stay at the "Three Squirrels," paying each evening for the charges for the day, and exciting an interest in the little town, of which he was fortunately in nowise cognisant.

For, curious as was his appearance, his mode of life was no less unconventional. At noon each day, he emerged from the inn, mounted the steep hillside behind the town, and, shading his keen dark eyes, scanned the glazed, white roads that lay right and left in endless perspective. Then he would press his hand upon his forehead, heave a sigh of relief, and return to the porch of the "Three Squirrels." He gave no name, hence the gossips in the village christened him M. Personne; nor did he once betray whither he was going, or whence he came; but his scant store of linen was of exquisite texture, and his shabby brown wide-awake hat bore the name of a Paris manufacturer. He talked to few and only when forced into conversation. His remarks upon intellectual generalities, when, for example, chatting with the village Curé, were brilliant and instructive; but of the subjects in which most are interested—contemporary politics, literature, and the like—he was strangely ignorant. But to all alike, rich or poor, he invariably evinced the most exquisite courtesy, and the children of Arranches simply worshipped him. Thus matters went on for several weeks, until the landlord of the "Three Squirrels" had long since ceased to trouble his busy brain about the mysterious M. Personne, or to doubt that the store of golden louis was not inexhaustible.

This condition, however, of beautiful trustfulness was doomed to be rudely shattered, for one morning M. Personne entered the landlord's little office and said very simply:

"My good landlord, I fear my most agreeable sojourn is at an end. I have but ten minutes left unless—unless," he added hesitatingly, and looked half pathetically at the landlord's face.

But the latter did not give his luckless guest time to state the hypothetical alternative.

"He was *désolé*—completely *désolé*. He loved monsieur greatly; monsieur was good and kind. But times were so hard, and the Communal taxes so high,

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and the phylloxera had so ravaged the vineyards, that, in fact——"

"So be it, friend," said M. Personne sadly. "I will wander forth once more with ten noble louis in my purse, and sweet recollections of little Arranches and the 'Three Squirrels' in my heart. Yet gladly would I stay," he continued, and he darted a quick glance down the long road, and gave an involuntary little shudder. "I am very happy. Could I not earn some money somewhere—somehow? I am strong, though I am so thin, and once on a day knew something—at least, I fancy so."

The landlord shook his head. These white hands had never done manual labour; there was no demand for such intellectual skill as M. Personne undoubtedly possessed. And yet what a customer he had been!—four francs a day, and always paid at nightfall. And so gentle, and so magnanimous in the matter of "extras." It would be a pity to lose him.

Now it so happened that on that very evening there came to the "Three Squirrels" M. Damasin, the foreman of the pottery works which form the industry in Arranches. They were but poor little works, wherein was made just simple ware in use among the peasants of the district. But M. Damasin was a prescient and ambitious man, and foresaw possibilities of greatness in the Arranches pottery.

The little town had already been discovered by the globe-trotting English, whither they sought shelter from the scorching heat of Geneva; and wherever English people go they buy things. The clay of the district was singularly good. And, lastly, M. Damasin had discovered that he possessed among his work people one true artist, whose exquisite skill, recognised by himself alone, was wasted, but who could be depended upon to rise to her opportunities. This girl, Jeanne Carteret, had for the last two years "thrown" most of the pottery in the Arranches works—that is to say, hers was the task of molding the lump of wet clay as it lay upon the potter's wheel into the cup, saucer, ewer, or whatever was being made—a delicate art truly, and one for which the poor peasant girl was rarely gifted.

Her control over the plastic mass as it was whirled upwards on the revolving disc was complete, the manipulation of her fingers most dexterous; above all her sense of form was poetical and true. The command in the works of labour was as yet limited, and hitherto Jeanne Carteret had herself apportioned the lumps of clay ready to be cast on the potter's wheel.

For the future this was to be changed, and she was to apply herself entirely to the one branch of art for which she, though but a poor peasant, was so exceptionally endowed. To find an assistant, however, was no easy task. The knack of exactly forming the lump to suit the intended article, so that the oven be not encumbered with superfluous clay, was an intuitive faculty granted to few—certainly not easily to be discovered among rough-handed *ouvriers*, so, at least, said M. Damasin to a select audience that evening at the "Three Squirrels," as he disclosed to their wondering ears his cherished scheme.

But his difficulty was the landlord's opportunity. Why not give the mysterious M. Personne a chance? He was clearly a man of education and refinement. His hands were strong and lithe. He was an honest man and not such a fool as he looked, and—he desired immediate employment.

M. Damasin was astonished at the proposal; he liked not mysterious strangers; but then, after all, a workman's value depended on his skill, not his antecedents, and the more he turned it over, the more reasonable did the proposal appear, and so eventually he decided to grant the cadaverous stranger a trial. Thus it was that the wandering scholar and the simple peasant girl sat side by side at the potter's wheel.

"And now, monsieur," said Jeanne, on the very first morning of his education, "what am I to call thee?"

The stranger started, placed his hand across his forehead, and thought. Then his brow grew dark and his eyes troubled, and he said: "Ah, mademoiselle, what you will. It is all so strange—so strange!"

"Then," said Jeanne, with a merry laugh, "I shall call thee what the children do—M. Personne."

"Do they call me that?" he replied, with a sad little laugh. "M. Personne; it is well, then. I fancy I was once some one, but now—well—I am—nobody."

"And now, Monsieur Nobody, thou must do just what I tell thee, and I will teach thee how to make lumps of clay, which is a beautiful art in itself—at least so M. Damasin says, and Jeanne stole a look at M. Personne's bewildered face, and laughed again.

And he, when he saw her sweet, piquant face and merry smile, also laughed, a laugh so soft and musical that Jeanne wondered thereat, as do they who hear for the first time a very sweet melody.

And forthwith she taught him the rudiments of his trade, the consistency at which he was to constantly keep the clay, and the approximate size of the lumps for each particular vessel, and so apt did he become under her gentle tutelage, and so nicely did his long white hands adjudge the weight of clay, that many a day Jeanne had done her allotted task while yet the sun was high in the heavens. And then, when enough of the rough ware had been thrown as could be baked and glazed, she would bring forth the beautiful designs of Etrurian and Pompeiian lamps which M. Damasin had brought her from Paris, and work till closing time for sheer love of art.

And the kindly-natured manager danced with ecstasy as the beautiful form grew into shape round the long, prehensile fingers, and the graceful neck flew upwards from the outward compression, or a dexterous little tap made the soft-lipped mouth. Moreover he had ever a kind word for her strange assistant, whose workman's blouse so belied his gentleness of speech, and whose labour was ever so ungrudgingly proffered. Then in the eventide M. Personne would escort his workmate to her home, and, leaving her with a profound bow, would betake himself to the little garret which the good-natured landlord of the "Three Squirrels" had placed at his disposal.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said Jeanne to her friends, "but he is droll! When he hands me the clay he does it like a Grand Duke; and his bows! and his '*Bonsoir, mademoiselle*; may the angels protect thee!' Ah, had I not to work, work, work, I could laugh all day."

But the day came when Jeanne no longer laughed. For, chancing to ask him some trifling question about a vase, he began to tell her many strange things of that world of art of which she was so ignorant, and yet, with artistic instinct, craved to know. And then, again, how strange was his method of imparting this delightful knowledge!—that in itself was interesting. For sometimes he would talk with freedom of beautiful things he had seen in Rome or in Florence, and then suddenly he would stop, make the gesture she knew so well of pressing his hand on his forehead, and then relapse into silence.

That he had travelled much she could see, but

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much of what he related was vague and inconsequent and yet, oh, so absorbing! So no longer did Jeanne laugh at him and make fun of him in a workroom, but rather, when all around were jesting, she would strive to draw out the treasures of that capricious, inexplicable mind. His courtesy, too—so out of place in the rough workroom—no longer moved her merriment, but became a sweet accompaniment of her life, and the hours he sat beside the potter's wheel a tender interlude in her sordid surroundings. Above all, she felt that beautiful protective sense that good-natured women, however lowly born, feel for those who are weak or suffering.

And so it happened that when summer changed to autumn, and the shadows on the hill-side grew daily shorter, and the leaves fell apace, Jeanne began to feel a strange aching void when the ragged M. Personne was away, and a sweet calm when he was by her side.

"Thou, too, wilt be the Grand Duchesse, *petite*," said the other girls. "Ah! take care, Jeanne; lovers who come from nowhere ride away to nowhere."

And Jeanne would blush and make light of their jesting, and in her own tender heart cherish her simple secret. Would he ever know? thought she. Ah, no; she was but a poor peasant girl, and he was surely a great gentleman, for all his ragged clothes. And so every day she bent over her wheel, and beside her on his settle sat the man she had grown to love.

But one morning he did not come; the hours passed, and the clay remained unformed, and at last the strange ws arrived that, the night before, two men had come the "Three Squirrels," and carried away with them M. Personne. The landlord would tell nothing; but the good folk of Arranches knew full well that no one can be removed by force unless the law permits, and they made strange remarks which cut Jeanne to the very heart, and the girls laughed and reminded her of their prophecy.

She said little, but worked and worked all day with desperate intensity. At first she used to cry silently, and her hot tears fell one by one upon the wet clay, but not for long. One cannot indulge in the more tender emotion on twenty francs a week and only one good meal a day. And, after all, there was always the strange hope, to which all women cling, that he would some day come back to her. But her face grew thin and wan, and her grey eyes larger than ever. And good M. Damasin amented the day he admitted the white-handed scarecrow into his works, and he resolved to distract her thoughts from her hopeless love.

"Jeanne," said he one day, "we have taught you all we know, and there is no scope here for further improvement. We are going to extend the works next year, and in the meantime I will send you to Paris, so that you may learn to 'throw' really artistic work before that time comes."

And so in the springtime Jeanne Carteret left her native home and went out to the great world of Paris, and though her heart still ached she felt a restless longing for the new life of art and toil.

Now, it happened that one Sunday in May the kind, good landlady with whom she lived suggested they should go into the Bois de Boulogne, and see all the grand folk go to the races. Jeanne was nothing loth, and so they went forth and watched the stream of carriages and horsemen. One by one they drove by, and Jeanne looked and wondered at the prancing horses and the beautiful dresses of the ladies. Then suddenly a splendidly appointed carriage dashed by them, and Jeanne felt her heart beat, and the blood surge in her cheeks. For sitting in it by the side of a beautiful lady was M. Personne. He was dressed in the height of fashion, his beard was trimmed, but Jeanne recognised him in an instant.

"Madame," cried the poor girl with an effort, "who is that—that gentleman there with the lady? See, he is bowing to the officer on horseback?"

"Oh, that poor droll—that is the Duc de Champfleury; the mad duke they call him. Five years ago he was the most promising man in France, the most noble gentleman, and the most accomplished; but he was hurt in the great railway accident at Basle—his brain was affected and he lost his memory. For some time he was under restraint, not, indeed, that he was ever violent, but because he scarcely realised where he was, or, indeed, who he was, and unprincipled people could influence him for harm; but he escaped in a very wonderful way, and for many months eluded his keepers; they could not discover his whereabouts, but now they say he is almost well again, and his wife, the lady beside him—why, Jeanne, my child, are you fainting? Ah, *mon Dieu!* it is the sun!"

It was not the sun, nor did Jeanne Carteret faint. She merely pressed her hand against her beating heart, and returned home sorrowing.

LE VIER.

To Lady Gardeners! Likewise to Gentlemen! You should get a copy of *Home Notes* for this week. It contains a most Instructive Article on the "HOME CULTURE OF FLOWERS."

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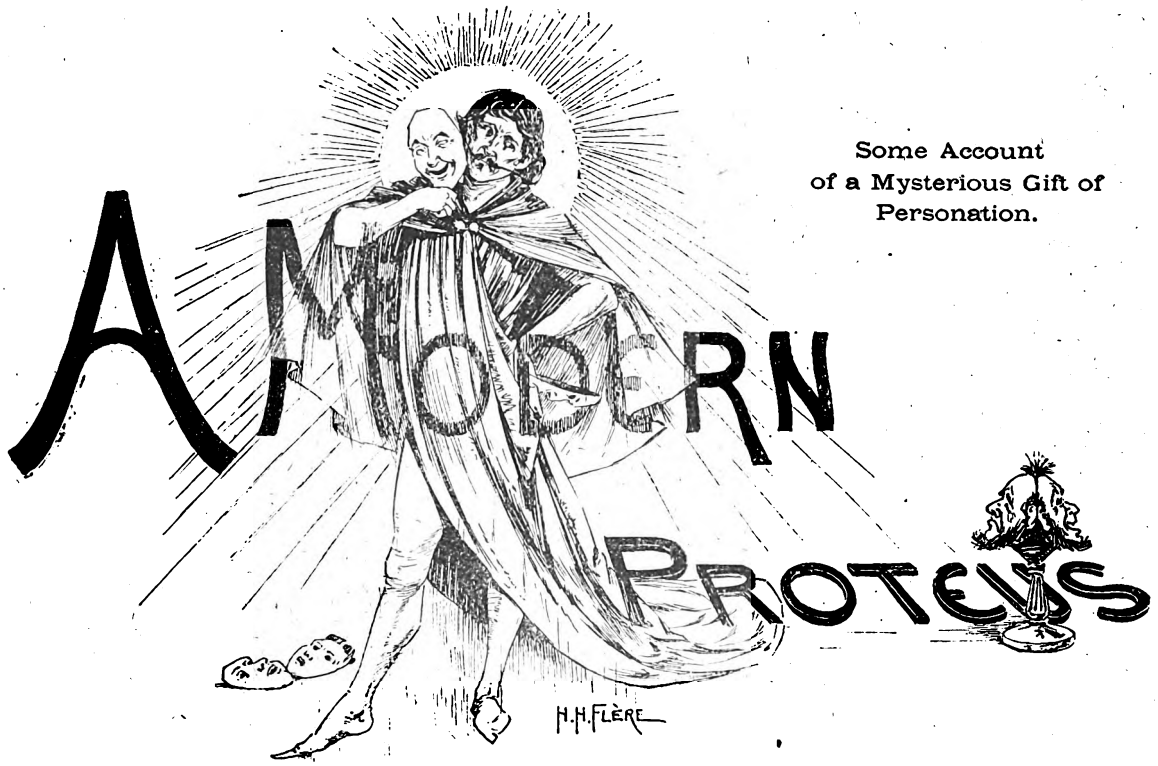

Some Account of a Mysterious Gift of Personation.

IT is now a little more than a week ago since a company of gentlemen were sitting and talking in a certain club—I am not at liberty to say which—in this city. The company numbered some eight or ten persons, three of whom were strangers. I forget how the conversation turned upon the mysterious and occult. I think, however, now that I consider the matter calmly, that the subject was led up to, with a definite purpose, by one of the gentlemen present who had, as it turned out, a very definite object in doing so. At any rate, the topic is one possessing a certain charm for the average human mind, and each of the company was contributing his quotum of information or idea to the general fund.

"Now, take your theosophists," said Robson. "If one can only credit what they claim, they must be possessed of powers which ought to make them masters of any situation, either for good or evil. But what have they done practically in either direction?"

"But then," objected Harding, "one of the conditions of their acquiring control over matter, it must be remembered, is a course of training which practically robs them of the desire to use that control."

"And," put in Thurman, "this course of training is said to so elevate the moral and intellectual nature, as to render an adept incapable of doing an evil action."

"Madame Blavatsky," remarked the cynical Cook, "is, I suppose, a case in point. I am of opinion, for one, that all of her miracles were well arranged and preconcerted tricks."

"Whatever may be the case with Madame Blavatsky, gentlemen," put in one of the strangers who had been introduced as a Mr. Wharncliffe, "I do not think that anyone who has visited India, and seen the performances of the native jugglers, can apply the same strictures to them. I have myself witnessed some most strange and unaccountable feats in that mysterious country."

The speaker was a tall, dark, fine-looking, bearded man, of perhaps forty or thereabouts, on whose skin tropical suns had evidently done their work, of a rather grave and serious aspect, and distinguished air. Beyond these features, which are not so rare as to be extraordinary among polished and travelled gentlemen of any country in the world, there was another, which at once withdrew him from the conventional type I have depicted. That was the eye. It was an eye with a bright, black, dazzling pupil, which would have served to render its owner singular in any company. It was an eye, too, that seemed to lack, when I first saw it, what I shall term soul, and depth, and calm. Not that it was forbidding, but, on the contrary, attractive, and the longer I looked at it, the more pleasant and attractive did it seem to become.

"My friend, Mr. Wharncliffe, here," explained Harding, who had introduced him, himself a member of a large mercantile house, "is recently from the East, and can give us, I doubt not, some interesting points on the occult from his own personal experience."

The stranger waved his hand deprecatingly, and assured us that his knowledge was confined merely to what he had seen. He was not prepared, he said, to philosophise upon causes.

"You have, all of you," he went on, "doubtless read of—perhaps some of you have seen—those feats, or tricks of legerdemain, performed commonly by Hindoo jugglers of the better sort; such as planting a seed in a flower-pot, wherefrom rises a plant before your eyes; producing bowls of water, when there was apparently

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no possible place of concealment for objects of such dimensions; and all this with no stage paraphernalia, such as our modern conjurors, who imitate these tricks, have ready to their hand, but simply upon the open ground, the spectators standing round. But, perhaps, the most marvellous of these tricks, or deceptions," he proceeded, "is that in which the juggler plants a wooden pole in the soil, up which he successively sends a cat, a monkey, and several other small animals, each of which disappears on reaching the top—vanishes, so to speak, into thin air. Not a vestige of them is afterwards seen."

"May it not be," suggested someone, "that this miraculous effect is produced by exerting some sort of influence, akin to mesmeric, upon the eyes of the spectators—that the juggler really sends no animals at all up his pole, but merely makes the spectators think he does?"

"Just like that power," remarked someone else, "with which some mediæval necromancers were supposed to have been gifted. Scott uses it, if I remember right, in his 'Lay of the Last Minstrel'—the glamour, I think it was called. The Lady of Branksome sends someone she does not wish to be recognised from the castle—or was it the hobgoblin, Gilpin?—but, anyhow, as he passes the warder at the gate, he casts the 'glamour' over him, and the warder avers that nothing passed the gate but a 'a wisp of hay.'"

"I think, gentlemen, I can give a little reminiscence which may, perhaps, serve to throw some light upon this matter," said a voice in somewhat diffident, hesitating tones, which were more noticeable as they broke the pause which had succeeded the argument of the last speaker.

I turned like the rest to see who had spoken, as the voice was unfamiliar. It was a middle-sized, grey-haired, and grey-whiskered old gentleman, with a benevolent aspect, who beamed modestly at us through his spectacles, and like Harding's friend, Wharncliffe, had been brought to the club that evening by one of the members, and introduced to us as Mr. Johnson, a retired merchant.

"I hardly know, gentlemen, whether I am justified," resumed Mr. Johnson, with an apologetic air, "in taking part in the discussion of a subject of which I know so little, and have myself no personal experience. What I purpose telling you, if you will allow me, are the experiences of another, and you must judge for yourselves what they are worth. I should not, in fact, have intruded them at all upon your notice, had they not seemed to me to be peculiarly opposite to the present discussion. If you care to hear them, I shall be proud to serve you, and I can confidently assure you that the recital will not take long."

We encouragingly gave assent to Mr. Johnson, who thereupon told the following story:

"The scene of my part of the experience, gentlemen, if it can be called a part at all, was laid in the recently demolished prison of Pentonville. I, for a considerable time, held contracts for supplying a certain line of commodities to the prison, and as my business naturally took me there upon many occasions, I naturally became acquainted with many of the officials connected with the institution.

"About five or six years ago, while there to transact some business, which I found would entail my waiting for an hour or two, owing to the absence of the person it was necessary for me to see, and while I was sauntering about to kill time, I fell into conversation with Inspector Coulter, the well-known detective officer, who proposed that we should make a tour of the prison, he volunteering to be my guide. While I flatter myself that I have no taste for spectacles of misery, yet, having nothing better to do, I gladly availed myself of the kind offer of my able mentor, and an able mentor he proved himself to be.

"We passed through gallery after gallery, till we arrived at a portion where the securities seemed to be extra strong. The structure of the cells, fortified as they were by all the skill that can be brought to bear upon steel and iron, seemed to offer an impassable barrier to the criminals confined within, however daring and ingenious they might be. The cells situated in that part of the building, my guide explained, were reserved for the most dangerous and desperate class of criminals.

A repulsive-looking old man.

"At length we paused before one of the most forbidding of the sepulchre-like cells, and the Inspector asked me to look through the little square orifice in the door, which seemed to serve at once for the passage of food, air, and light to the wretched prisoners inside. I did so, and crouching in a corner, I beheld a grey and repulsive-looking old man, his hair and beard long, unkempt, and straggling.

"He took not the least notice of our presence, though he must have been, I think, aware of it. I was unprepared, however, for the—as I thought—heartless conduct of my guide, the more so, as he had spoken kindly and sympathetically to many of the prisoners we had passed.

"Absolutely unaccustomed as I am to the use of slang language and averse as I am to being the

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medium of its delivery, even in recounting it, truth compels me to say that upon this occasion Inspector Coulter, after stepping up to the orifice before referred to, and, actually making mouths at the poor, cowering wretch within, said:

"'Come, brace up, old man. None of these fakes. You can't play it on me. Why can't you give us something better than that? Make yourself the Prince of Wales or Mr. Gladstone, for instance. Have some style about you.'

"I confess I was shocked at this heartless tirade against an old and defenceless prisoner, who, however, took not the least notice of us, and presently we passed on.

"'That,' said the detective, 'is the most dangerous, the most elusive, and most inexplicable criminal that it ever has been my good or bad luck to come across. I saw you were surprised at the way I treated him, but if you knew about him what I know, you wouldn't think so.'

"I became interested to know what could have given this apparently innocuous old man such distinction in the detective's eyes, and upon our return in the officers' quarters, as I had still some time to spare, I reverted to the subject and questioned my friend regarding him and what he had done to make him such an object of official aversion and to necessitate his subjection to such rigorous treatment.

"'What has he done?' returned the Inspector testily; 'the question should rather be, what has he not done? Heaven only knows what unknown villainies, with his peculiar powers, and his peculiar opportunities for mischief, that man, if he can be called a man, has perpetrated. His is the most extraordinary and incomprehensible case that has ever come under my notice,' he continued, shaking his head. 'Nobody can make head or tail of it. No one really believes *me*, when I tell them what has come under my notice. They imagine that *I* am labouring under a delusion, and had it not been for a piece of peculiarly good fortune, and I may add, some very hard and close work of my own—' (You see, gentlemen," remarked Mr. Johnson parenthetically, "the whole affair impressed me so much that, having naturally a good memory, and my friends being pleased to credit me with being something of a *raconteur*, I am enabled to give you the story pretty much as Inspector Coulter gave it me)— 'the fellow never would have been brought to justice at all.

"'Even when I had him "dead set," as we call it, he would have escaped, if I had not nailed him by a ruse. Would *you* believe it, if I told you,' here the Inspector sunk his voice almost to a whisper, and spoke slowly and impressively, at the same time looking me straight in the eyes, 'would *you* believe that the old man you saw in that felon's cell is no more old than I am—at least, such is my firm conviction—and I am only forty-five? Would *you* believe that that man possesses the miraculous faculty of changing his appearance at will, not by a clever manipulation of disguises like your ordinary cracksman, or even like some members of my own profession, but by some mysterious power which seems to be innate in him? Would *you* believe that that grey and decrepit old man, if he were once outside his cell, could and would walk coolly and easily out of gaol, under the noses of all the warders and officers of the prison; yes, even under my own nose. did I not possess an infallible mode of detecting him and compelling him to resume his natural form. Yes, sir, he could walk out of that prison in the semblance of the governor himself if he so desired—at least, that is my firm conviction, though, unfortunately, it is nobody else's. Well, I hope they will not find out its truth some day to their cost.'

"I did not know, gentlemen, what to make of these words. Here was one of the most astute members of the metropolitan detective force, a man whose reputation and whose deeds put him at the head of his profession, giving expression to a theory so utterly at variance with common sense, that I did not know what to think.

"'He would have to be a very skilful actor and possess something of a wardrobe to do such a thing,' I at last remarked.

"'That is what they all say,' returned the detective impatiently. 'That is the way they all account for this man's powers—if, in fact, they give him credit for any; for there are many members of the police, and many reputable citizens outside, who still consider him a victim of mistaken identity; and, as I said before, had it not been for the direct testimony I was able to produce, together with my own unimpeachable reputation, this incomprehensible villain would never have been convicted.'

"'But what did he do?' I asked; 'what was the charge against him? and of what crime is he now convicted?'

"'Grand larceny,' returned my friend, 'and, thanks to me, he has got the full extent of the law. His time will not be out for a good many years yet, and, by that time, I hope to be able to restrain him in confinement by some means or other, by convincing the public of his true nature. He will, at any rate, be kept under surveillance.'

"'But surely,' I said, 'what he is enduring now is very rigorous treatment for such a comparatively simple offence as grand larceny.'

"'My only object is to prevent his escape,' explained the Inspector. 'Apart from his being subjected to such confinement, his treatment in the matter of everything else is on a par with that of criminals of his own class. I have been the means of putting him where he is, and consider that I was perfectly justified in doing so.'

"I shuddered to think of the misery in store for any one who might be so unfortunate as to incur the displeasure of Inspector Coulter, and wondered whether after all, the prisoner I had seen might not owe his wretched condition to some delusion on the part of the great detective himself—the brightest minds, it is said, are sometimes subject to such.

"'But the best thing I can do is to give you a brief history of the case,' continued the Inspector, 'and then you can judge for yourself. Something over a year ago, I received a letter from old Mr. Chisholm, senior partner of the well-known banking house of Chisholm, Moffat and Co., requesting me to call upon him immediately, and, as it was after banking hours when I received the dispatch, I concluded to call at his house. I found the old gentleman in a very perturbed state of mind. He told me that his bank had been robbed that forenoon in a very mysterious manner. He had gone out, as was his custom, about eleven o'clock, and while he was absent, a person, got up to resemble himself, had used this disguise to secure a considerable sum of money.

"'It was Mr. Chisholm's custom to leave the bank at eleven o'clock, and to be gone for about half-an-hour. So methodical was he in this respect that the clerks were surprised when, scarcely two minutes after he had left, he returned, and walking to his private office, immediately summoned his confidential clerk by bell. He then told him to bring him a thousand pounds in

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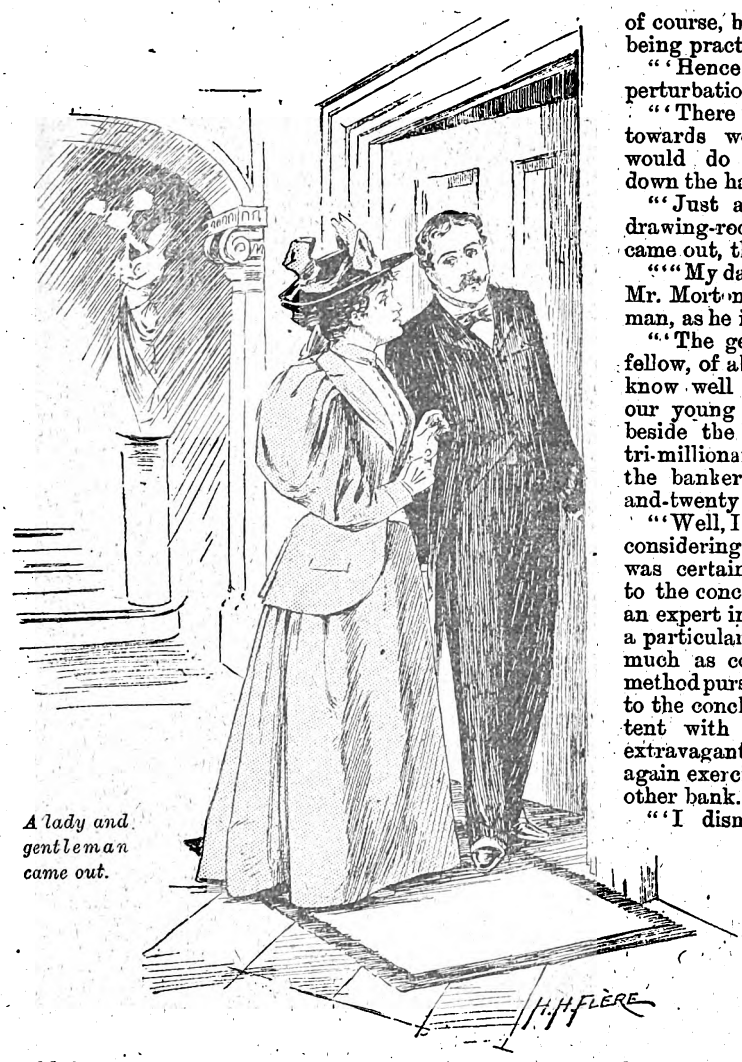


A lady and gentleman came out.

gold, in two bags. The clerk returned with the money, which Mr. Chisholm then put in his coat-tail pockets, a bag in each pocket, and immediately left the bank. Though the proceeding was somewhat unusual, and though Mr. Chisholm had forgotten to leave a memorandum of the sum drawn, nothing more was thought of it. He again returned at his customary hour, and it was not until the day's balance had been made up that the cashier reminded him of the morning's incident.

"'To say that Mr. Chisholm and his clerks were surprised is to give no expression to the general state of feeling, Mr. Chisholm affirming that he had not returned to the bank, as was stated, and had drawn no money that day, while the clerks were as positive that he had; two of them averring they had seen him receive the money and put it in his pocket. It then dawned upon him that he had been so cleverly personated that his clerks had all been deceived, and this became more apparent, as his personator was said by his confidential clerk to have spoken in low and unusual tones, briefly ordering the money to be brought, and evidently had not dared to write a receipt for it, as his writing would, of course, have at once exposed the deception that was being practised.

"'Hence my peremptory summons and the banker's perturbation.

"'There certainly was not much to go upon towards working up a case, but I told him I would do what I could, and we walked together down the hall towards the front door.

"'Just as I was leaving Mr. Chisholm's house, the drawing-room door opened, and a lady and gentleman came out, the former in outdoor dress.

"'"My daughter, Inspector Coulter; Inspector Coulter, Mr. Morton—my prospective son-in-law," said the old man, as he introduced us.

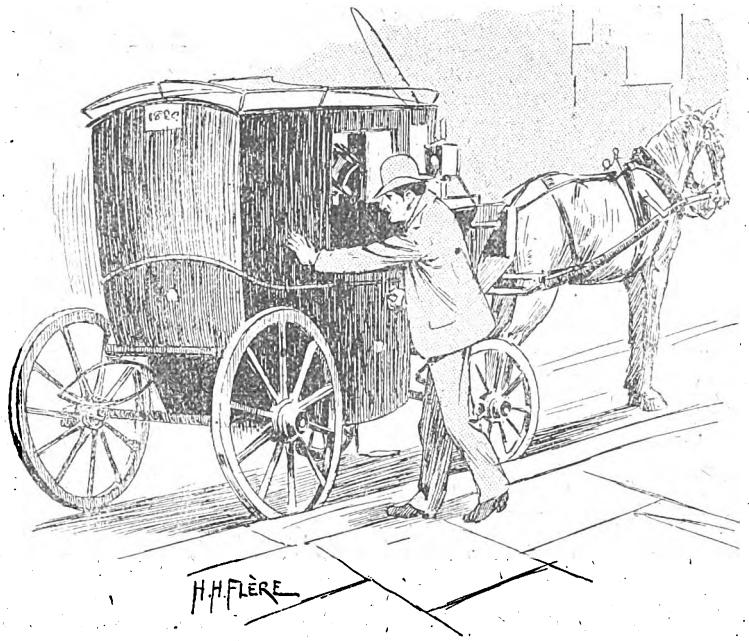
"'The gentleman—Mr. Morton—was a fine-looking fellow, of about five-and-thirty, or thereabouts, whom I know well by sight, and also by reputation, as one of our young millionaires. I rather envied his position beside the banker's daughter, as, besides being a bi- or tri-millionairess (if I may be allowed the expression) as the banker's heiress, she was a very pretty girl of five-and-twenty or so.

"'Well, I said "Good-bye," and walked down the street, considering the chances of discovering the thief. It was certainly a very pretty piece of work, and I came to the conclusion that the fellow who had done it was an expert in that particular line. One thousand was not a particularly big haul, I reasoned, but it was about as much as could be conveniently carried away in the method pursued, without exciting suspicion; and I came to the conclusion that the thief would not be long content with this small sum—that class of gentry is extravagant—and that it would not be long before he again exercised his talents in the same way upon some other bank.

"'I dismissed all idea of his appearing again at Chisholm, Moffat and Co.'s, that being the last place he would now be likely to visit.

"'When I considered the matter further, however, I saw how slim my chances were of catching my thief by watching the various banks. Even had I possessed an accurate description of him, there were just as many chances as there are banks in London to one against my being at the identical bank he meant to operate on at the time he entered it, supposing that I remained there during the business hours of a whole day. But when I considered that, in addition to this, I had no description to go upon, and that he could have no object in personating Mr. Chisholm again, I saw how useless it would be to watch aimlessly for him, besides entailing a heavy loss of valuable time. Still, I determined to chance a day or two on it, if only for Mr. Chisholm's satisfaction. He would personate, I argued, the manager of a bank, as in Mr. Chisholm's case; probably, too, an old man, as he had already been successful in that *rôle*.

"'So I looked about for a bank with a manager of that description, and having selected one which seemed to possess the requisites, I awaited developments. For three days I watched the manager go in and out; watched narrowly to see whether his exit would be followed by the entrance of anyone else of similar appearance. Then I reasoned with myself how foolish I was, and on the third day I started about noon to Mr. Chisholm's house, as I heard he was somewhat indisposed, to tell him that our sole dependence must now be placed on the work of my deputies, two of whom I



Banged the door to with a "Where to now, sir?"

had put immediately on the case, with the faint clue of tracing the thief by a certain stamp on the bags in which the coin was put up.

"'As I neared the house, at a distance of, perhaps, fifty yards, I saw Mr. Morton, the young lady's lover, emerge from the doorway, and descend the steps. He came toward me, and nodded as we passed each other.

"'I walked on in the direction of the house, which was a corner one, and as I neared it, saw a figure crossing the street, and evidently also making for the house. I mounted the steps and rang the bell, and just as the servant opened the door, I heard steps behind me. On turning, what was my astonishment to see Mr. Morton, whom I had passed upon the street about a minute before. Now I distinctly recollected looking down the street in the direction I had come, just before mounting the steps, and there was one within the distance of the street. I was morally certain that the gentleman beside me was the one I had seen crossing the street. This train of thought occupied but a second.

"'"You have made a quick return, Mr. Morton," I remarked, as he brushed past me, muttering something I did not catch.

"'Mr. Chisholm, the footman said, was not in, but would I wait? He was liable to return at any moment. I said that I would, and was shown into a little study, where I had had the interview with him before.

"'I am a man of quick perception—my profession has had something to do with making them so. I could not account for the reappearance of Mr. Morton. Could it be a brother? That must be it. And certainly a twin brother, by the remarkable resemblance. I was roused from my little reverie by the sound of voices in rather an excited key. They came from the partition door which separated the study from the adjoining room.

"'"I tell you, Clara, it will be best for all parties," said a male voice with a decided inflection.

"'"But, oh, Harry, it will break papa's heart," pleaded a female one.

"'The voices grew indistinct. I made up my mind that they were those of the gentleman who had just entered, and Mr. Chisholm's daughter. He was evidently trying to persuade her to do something to which she was averse. And she called him Harry—Henry, I knew, was Mr. Morton's name. Then it *was* Mr. Morton I had met upon the street. But how—here the voices became distinct again.

"'"But why this sudden change of mind, Harry? When you left here, scarcely ten minutes ago, you were so loving and so contented that we should wait till the day that had been fixed upon—and it is little more than a week, dearest!" cooed a dove-like voice that a man must have been a brute to resist.

"'"Yes; but Clara," returned the male voice in tones far more harsh and imperative than endearing, "it must be as I say. There are grave reasons for it, which I will explain later on. I will guarantee to satisfy your father later on of the necessity of the step. But not a word now. And, Clara, remember if we do not take this step now, it may be years before I can call you my own—it may be never."

"'A passionate burst of tears was all the answer to this.

"'Ha! thought I, it is an elopement they are planning. But what could be Morton's object? Was he in difficulties? And if he was, how could eloping with his lady-love help him? And what difference could a week make—for had not Miss Chisholm said that the day had been fixed for a week hence? There was some mystery which demanded explanation. There was something crooked evidently, which I then and there determined to straighten out.

"'Again the male voice became audible.

"'It is now one o'clock, Clara. I shall go down to the bank and draw some money. I will return at two sharp. Have everything ready by that time. We must catch the afternoon express for Dover. Good-bye, dearest,' and the dialogue ended with what I thought a rather perfunctory kiss.

"'My mind was at once made up. Hastily scrawling a line to the banker, and leaving it on the table, I emerged from the door just as Mr. Morton was crossing the street. At the corner he paused and raised his arm. He was evidently signalling for something. Half-way down the street stood a cab with nobody on the box. I instantly grasped the situation. It was neck or nothing with me now, as there was not another vehicle in sight, and I was determined to see the play out. So, when Morton started to walk for that cab, I followed him swiftly, and, just as he reached it, ran the last few steps and came up puffing and blowing, opened the door, with a "Sorry to detain you, sir, but a friend ——" banged it to with a "Where to now, sir?" jumped on the box, and was whirling off to the City, before the poor driver, who had doubtless stepped in somewhere for a moment for a glass of beer, reappeared to realise his loss. We detectives are sometimes as free in the conversion of property as your veriest thief himself, when occasion calls for it, but then it is only temporary, you know; the owner finds the property at Scotland

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Yard in the morning, and gets well repaid for any loss he may have sustained by its appropriation.

"'Mr. Morton gave me the simple direction, "Fenton Street," and when I reined up at the corner, got out and told me to wait until he returned, which he said would be in a few minutes. I pretended to acquiesce, but immediately gave the cab in charge to a lounger, and followed him closely, though unseen. He sauntered leisurely along the street, finally taking a good position where he could command a good view of the entrance to the Carsell Bank. Presently he looked at his watch, and seemed to be growing impatient. After a minute or two I saw his eye light up, and looking across the street, I saw the manager of the bank—I knew him perfectly by sight—leaving it in close conversation with another gentleman.

"'I will not say what my thoughts were when I saw Mr. Morton, after a lapse of a minute or two, cross the street and enter the bank. I was unavoidably crowded back by the throng, but certainly did not enter the building more than five seconds behind him. I looked round but he was not there. Had he escaped me? or—a strange suspicion floated across my mind. What if I had chanced after all upon the solution of the very mystery which I had given up in despair that very morning?

"'I kept my eyes fixed upon the door leading to the manager's office, took up a position behind an angle of the counter where I would not be seen from that direction, and waited. In about five minutes the door opened and there issued from it a figure that I could have sworn was the manager of the bank whom I had seen pass down the street a few minutes before. The same style of clothes, the same hat, the same trim, close-cropped white beard and whiskers—all were there. I had evidently found my man. But the idea of finding this expert criminal in the millionaire, Mr. Morton! Should I arrest him on the moment? I could easily have done so, but admiration for his admirable get-up deterred me.

"'We detectives you know entertain a sincere admiration for criminals who know their business. We look upon crime as a profession; it can be raised even to the dignity of an art. We are the critics of that art, and as critics cannot help admiring a thorough artist. I accordingly did not act on my first impulse; but, knowing now that I had my man whenever I wanted him, I felt supremely easy for the outcome. A great load had been taken from my mind, and the cheerful smile with which I bustled up to the cab a few moments after my fare got there, was not forced but real. So was the deferential bow with which I greeted the fact that between the bank and the cab he had, while walking, as thoroughly rechanged himself from the manager of the Carsell Bank to Mr. Morton as he had originally done from Mr. Morton to the manager of the Bank. For, it must be remembered, I had not even then dreamed of the true nature of the transformation. There were sufficient points of dress resemblance between personator and personated upon the present occasion as to make, to my mind at that time, the personation possible.

"'After my fare had got in I very gingerly steered my way through the thronged street, with the express purpose of gaining time to come across one of my co-workers, to whom I could give instructions on the case, there being none of them in sight when I started. Luckily, before I had gone far, I espied one of my deputies to whom I signalled, and who, in ten seconds of whispered conversation, knew all that was required. Well, I made such good time on the drive back that Mr.

His daughter shrieked and fainted.

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Morton was able to come within a very few minutes of keeping his appointment with Miss Chisholm at two o'clock. As I opened the door of the cab for him I stood so that he could not pass me without brushing against me, and I then became aware that at least one of his pockets was well loaded with something solid and heavy. I gave him a short start, but reached the door and entered the house but little behind him. Mr. Chisholm was now at home, and to him I briefly explained as much as was necessary of the day's experiences. He heard me in amazement.

"'"Mr. Morton a bank robber!" he exclaimed. "Why, the thing is preposterous. He does not need it. Besides, he banks with that very house."

"'"But the man closeted with your daughter at this moment," I replied, for his overcoat was hanging in the hall, and I knew very well where he was, "is not Mr. Morton at all."

"'At this moment the door of the drawing-room opened—Mr. Chisholm and I were standing in the hall—and Mr. Morton and Miss Chisholm came out, the latter, as before, in walking dress. Mr. Morton took his hat and overcoat from the rack and proceeded to put them on.

"'"Pardon me, Mr. Morton——" I began.

"'"Why, I paid you!" he said, recognising me as the cab-driver.

"'"Yes, but I am now in a different character," I said. "Don't you remember being introduced to me the other day as Inspector Coulter of the detective police?"

"'His countenance fell, but he said:

"'"Well, sir, what of that?"

"'"Simply that I must detain you," I said, "on suspicion. There have been two bank robberies committed lately, one at the Corsell Bank to-day, and the suspicion of having committed them rests on you. No doubt you can clear yourself of it completely, but I must nevertheless detain you."

"'"Why, what is the meaning of all this, Mr. Chisholm?" exclaimed Morton, while Clara clung to his side. "Will you allow me to be insulted in your house, and in the presence of your daughter? I have just come from the Corsell Bank, where I drew a considerable sum in gold. Here it is in my overcoat," slapping his pocket, "and for this I am to be accused of robbery!"

"'Of course, I had no proof of any crime having been committed, and was acting simply upon instinct; but just then the door bell rung, and, to my satisfaction, two officers entered, according to instructions, one of whom brought the news that the Corsell Bank had actually paid a thousand pounds a short while before to someone personating the manager, and the other, a warrant for the arrest of John Doe as the perpetrator of the crime.

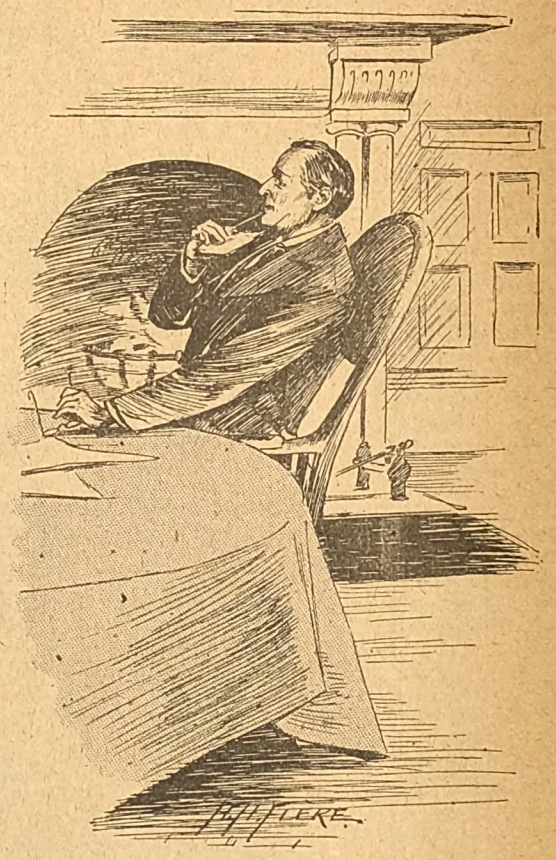
"'Mr. Chisholm was thunderstruck. His daughter shrieked and fainted. But I was accustomed to such scenes, and left them to the care of the household, while I handcuffed Mr. Morton and bundled him into a cab, which took us swiftly to Scotland Yard. I may state parenthetically that two hours afterwards, as I heard, Clara was in the arms of the real Mr. Morton, but does not to this day believe that he was not unjustly arrested and afterwards released. She always regards me with aversion when we meet.

"'Well, to make a long story short, though the bank officials swore that the accused in court was not the man they paid the money to, they identified the sacks, and my direct testimony, and the fact that the money was found upon his person, of course, convicted him. Since his confinement he has thought fit to assume and preserve the shape in which we saw him in his cell to-day. And now,' concluded Inspector Coulter, 'I ask you whether I am justified or not in treating, as I do, a man who, should he escape, possesses such untold capabilities for mischief?'"

* * * * *

"Well, gentlemen," went on Mr. Johnson, addressing us, "it was scarcely a month after that when I met my friend, the detective, in Regent Street. He had a troubled look on his face, and, as he shook my hand, said:

"'Well, he has escaped.'



Taking off, first his spectacles, then his trim, white beard.

"'What! Morton?' said I.

"'Yes the fellow we called Morton. He never gave us any name. He cut through his cell door, strong as it was, and the rest was easy. Yes, he's at large. But I'll get him again.'

"'How?' I asked curiously.

"'I have one infallible sign to go by,' replied the detective impressively, '*his eye*. Under all his transformations he could never change *that*. I'll come across him yet.'"

During Mr. Johnson's recital of his experience in Pentonville Prison our little party, which was lounging about on chairs in no fixed order, had been very attentive listeners; so attentive, in fact, that it had hardly noticed the advent of a messenger toward the conclusion, who

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delivered a large-sized envelope to the third stranger of the party. That gentleman, I noticed, simply took the envelope without a word, so engrossed was he, apparently, with the story, and put it in his pocket.

Just as Mr. Johnson concluded, however, and while there was the usual buzz and hum of approval which follows any story of any length, bad or good, two gentlemen got up simultaneously from their seats, stretched themselves and sauntered towards the door, which was open, and led to the main apartments of the club. I did not, and I do not think anyone else did, even notice who they were. One of the gentlemen got to the door, it seemed to me, a little before the other, closed it, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

This remarkable action had an electric effect upon the company. Everyone sat rooted to the spot and looked at the door. Surprise was still further depicted upon their countenances when they looked round and observed that two of the strangers who had been introduced that evening were not now in the room, and that the gentleman who had just locked the door and put the key in his pocket was a well-known detective, and that the other was a well-known club-man whom I shall call Mr. Wharton. It was further observed that Mr. Wharncliffe, the gentleman from India, who had been introduced by Mr. Harding, had disappeared. It was unaccountable. Nobody had left the room, nobody had entered it but the messenger. Mr. Johnson broke the suspense by coolly taking off, first his spectacles, then his trim, white beard and whiskers, and saying:

"Gentlemen, the story which I have just been telling you is so true that you will presently have practical proof of it. I am not sure, however, that I would have made it so long, or, in fact, have told it at all, if I had not wished to gain time, so that my friend, Mr. Hogan, might receive the warrant for the arrest of the gentleman who stands near him at the door. Gentlemen, the facts are these: I am Inspector Coulter, of the detective police force; that gentleman beside Mr. Hogan is the man Morton, who escaped from Pentonville; I have traced him to this city, where he has been about a week; to-day one of your prominent banks was robbed of ten thousand pounds. I recognised Morton in Mr. Wharncliffe *by his eye.*

"The money was paid late in the afternoon, and taken away in a cab, Morton, as usual, successfully personating the manager of the bank. Now he is, I suppose, personating someone else."

We had clustered excitedly to the door before Inspector Coulter had finished speaking. There, beside the detective stood the well-known Mr. Wharton, to whom, as I afterwards learnt, Wharncliffe had been introduced that day, protesting vigorously against his detention, and demanding to be told what all the trouble was about. We should all of us have taken oath that it was he, but Inspector Coulter held otherwise.

"Look at his *eye!*" he said as he slipped handcuffs on his wrists.

And in truth, though Warton's eye is clear and black, I never saw it with such an evil, dazzling glitter as I saw then. The process was perfectly legal, even if it had been Wharton, and so the club was treated to the spectacle of that popular and respected member being ignominiously conducted through its apartments and down its stairs, handcuffed and unceremoniously bundled into a cab. When the real Wharton came in an hour afterwards, he was the butt of the most annoying questions regarding his prison experience, and is a most mystified man yet.

As for Morton, he is now in prison, though no charge has been entered against him on the books, and but few know of the presence of so mysterious a character there. The reason that his name is not on the books is that no one knows where he has concealed the ten thousand pounds he obtained from the bank. There is a chance that he may be allowed to go free if he restores this money, and if so Inspector Coulter had better look sharp after him. As for the scientific diagnosis of the case, Doctor Martineaut and others—he is secreted, by the way, in the receiving hospital—are puzzling over it unceasingly.

They have discovered that so long as he is awake he has power to appear in almost any human shape he desires to all those in reach of his wonderful eye; but that when he is asleep, or under the influence of chloroform, he always looks the same, and that is the sinister, crafty character he is. One can hardly escape the conclusion that this mysterious gift of personation lies wholly and solely in some mysterious magnetic or mesmeric power, which affects the perceptive faculties of all brains that come within reach of his influence, and moulds their perceptions so that they can only appreciate such forms as are imagined in his own brain and projected upon theirs through the rays that dart from his dominant eye and are received by their subjective ones. This, however, must be left to our future psychological science to elucidate.

ROBERT DUNCAN MILNE.

How can the Sixth Number of *Pearson's Magazine*, published on the 1st of June fail to be of the greatest interest, when it includes among its literary and artistic contributors such names as those of Stanley L. Wood, C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne, George Griffith, Harry Furniss, Hal Hurst, R.B.A., Sydney Cowell, Robert Barr, Charles May, Sir Walter Besant, etc., etc.?

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ALMOST A TRAGEDY.

Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth. Charles Raymond's young wife was the happiest woman in the world until one fine day when she stood at the window watching him come up the avenue.

"Dear, noble fellow, how handsome he is," she said in a wifely rapture, as she watched him hurrying home. His beauty was purely of an imaginative type—he was near-sighted and his legs bowed a little, but to one woman he was a hero without a flaw, and that one woman was his wife.

"Dear boy, he must be starving," she further soliloquised. "He hardly ate a mouthful for breakfast. Why, what is that he is tearing up—must be a bill that he doesn't want me to see."

Mr. Charles Raymond had suddenly taken a folded paper from his pocket, glanced hurriedly at it, and then torn it into infinitely small bits, which he threw to the winds, which in their turn deposited them in a vacant piece of ground. There was a falling barometer in the Raymond family that day at noon. The social sun went under a cloud and stayed there. A gloom permeated the household atmosphere. It was not evolved by Mr. Raymond for he had come home in almost jubilant spirits. These went down correspondingly with the low pressure in the domestic area, and remained stationary at freezing point. His wife's spirits registered below zero.

A cold meal, a hurried embrace that was not returned, and the young man went back to his business, wondering what had caused the home weather to change so suddenly. When he was out of sight Mrs. Raymond put on her cloak and went out. She walked rapidly until she came to a vacant piece of ground that was in sight of the house. Here she stopped, looked up and down the street, scanned the windows of the houses in the neighbourhood, and said aloud:

"I'll do it. There's no harm in it, I am sure. It is my duty to know, as a wife, if Charlie has any bills to be troublesome. He has been economising lately, now I come to think of it. I can help him if he is in trouble, and I will."

Then she began searching over the ground like the veriest rag-picker, until she had collected a dozen or more small scraps of paper, not one of which was larger than the size of a single word. With the quick intuition of a woman, which is more like instinct than judgment, she saw that these scraps were not the remains of a bill, but of a sheet of note paper that had been closely written over in a bold masculine hand.

* * * * *

Locking herself in her room, Mrs. Raymond, seated at her desk with a sheet of blank paper and a bottle of gum before her, proceeded to restore the paper scraps to their relative positions. She worked long and patiently, developing at the same time every emotion in the human calendar. Anger, jealousy, indignation, scorn, and a consuming curiosity by turns possessed her. At times her face expressed incredulity, which was instantly followed by a dreadful certainty. She cried a little, but she was almost too angry for tears. Oh, to have been so deceived by one she had loved with her whole heart since she first knew him! And the honeymoon was scarcely over! Then she re-read the miserable letter. It was written by Charlie's chum, a man she had not yet seen, and who professed to be a woman-hater.

This was the letter:

"Dear Charlie,—I saw your divinity to-day. (Here Mrs. R. wept.) She is a beauty, and you're a lucky dog. ('Oh, the wretch!') She looked awfully swell in her pretty togs, and does your good taste credit. There's a lot of us fellows want to know the new beauty. ('I'll scratch her eyes out, the good-for-nothing!') Do you intend to let your old friends meet her, or do you want to keep her all to yourself? But we'll be on our good behaviour, Charlie, honour bright. She's a darling, and we want you to trot her out, and give us a regular introduction, and we'll get up a little supper after the theatre."

"An actress? Yes, Charlie does admire actresses, and his new 'divinity' is an actress! Oh, Charlie, Charlie, you have broken your wife's heart."

After a flood of tears Mrs. Raymond read a few closing lines, which were of no consequence, and the name signed to it "Reginald Newcombe." Then she took counsel with herself, with the result that she came to a sudden conclusion.

"I'll do it! 'I'll beard the lion in his den, the Douglas in his hall.'"

And Mrs. Raymond dressed herself in her prettiest costume and went out.

* * * * *

Reginald Newcombe, lawyer and commissioner, was in his office, the air of which was thick with tobacco smoke, when his confidential clerk—a seedy student in a shabby suit—plunged in from the outer room.

"Lady," he gasped, "dressed to kill! After divorce most likely. Where shall I——"

But this speech was cut short by the entrance of a beautiful young woman dressed in the height of fashion. The lawyer unlimbered himself from the table and stood up to gaze at the apparition.

"Could I speak to you a moment in private, sir?" she asked, smiling sweetly.

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"Yes, madam, come into my private office," he replied as pleasantly as was consistent with his gruff nature, while he said to himself: "Charlie Raymond's wife? H'm! Wonder if she is going to engage me as her lawyer. Be seated, please," and he dropped into a chair himself and began to brace up for the occasion. But Mrs. Raymond did not sit down. She remained standing, and had changed from smiles to tears, which coursed down her lovely cheeks in rivulets.

"Read that, sir, it is signed with your name," she said desperately.

"I don't know what you mean, my dear madam," said the lawyer impatiently. "Is this patchwork document——"

"Read, read. Every word is there. It is a communication from you to my husband, and your name confirms the infamy."

"Infamy? Oh, I see! May I ask," stiffening to meet the charge that he saw was coming, "if Charlie—Mr. Raymond—gave you this letter to read?"

"Oh, no, sir. He did not betray the confidence of his noble friend, certainly not. I—I—no matter how I became possessed of the letter—there should be no secrets between husband and wife."

"What do you wish me to do? Deny or confirm the authenticity of these scraps of paper?"

"This! Tell me the name of his divinity—the woman who has taken my h—h—husband's love from me. Let me see her that I may——"

"Murder her?" inquired the lawyer.

"No, that I may plead on my bended knees to give him back to me."

"Madam, you have conquered. I will call at your house to night and, in the presence of your husband, give you the information you have asked."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Newcombe, you have a kind heart, after all. Forgive me for this intrusion, but you do not know the depth of a wife's love."

"No. Thank goodness, I don't," mumbled the bachelor under his breath. Then aloud he said:

"Do not speak of this to your husband until I come this evening. Good-bye, Mrs. Raymond," and he showed her to the door.

When she was gone, he went back to his den, sat down in his chair and laughed until his face was purple.

"Jealous!" he roared. "The best joke of the season! Jealous of—oh, ha! ha!"

* * * * *

Charles Raymond had not passed one unhappy hour during the blissful three months of honeymoon which had promised to extend themselves into years. The shy bird of happiness had descended on his roof-tree and seemed to make a refuge there. And now in one brief moment she had opened her wings and soared away. What had frightened her? He did not know, and his heart was heavy within him. If this was a woman's caprice, then he was learning another phase of his wife's character and one that sorely disappointed him. The chill which had struck to his heart at noon that day continued with him. It was there when he went home at night. He tried to throw it off and act as if nothing had happened. But his wife repulsed his attempt to kiss her.

"What is the matter, Netta?" he asked anxiously, for he loved her very dearly.

"You ask me that—you—Charles Raymond. Oh, the wicked duplicity of men!" she said, with a withering scorn.

"Netta," said Charlie coolly, "I don't know why you are angry, but my conscience is clear. I have done nothing to deserve this treatment. Will you have a chop?" The servant had brought in the dinner.

"Chop?" repeated Netta in a heartbroken voice. "I suppose a man would eat if the whole house were tumbling about his ears."

"We will postpone any further discussion," suggested Charles quietly, as he did not wish to have domestic afflictions rehearsed in the kitchen.

So they ate in silence, and then went, by a common consent that had become mechanical, to the library, where they usually had music and a chat, when not interrupted by callers.

It appeared they were not to be alone. The bell rang loudly, and a voice was heard inquiring for Mr. and Mrs. Raymond. Charlie jumped to his feet, frowning angrily.

"Reggy Newcombe—what brings him here? Netta, I do not wish you to meet him—I——"

* * * * *

"Too late, old fellow," said a resolute voice. "I have called to pay my respects to Mrs. Raymond, and to apologise to you, Charlie, for a letter I wrote yesterday concerning your excellent wife, and——"

"My wife did not see the letter or know that it was written," said Charlie stiffly. "I had too much respect for her to tell her that you dare allude to her slangily as you would speak of a horse or dog. I tore that letter up into scraps, and intended to have it out with you as soon as we met."

"You did, eh? Now, my dear Mrs. Raymond, will you kindly listen to me a moment, as I consider an apology is due in this matter, and I want you to intercede for me. Charlie doesn't know what a staid individual I am, but seems to think I am one of the boys. I assure you that the head and front of my offending is the letter in question, which he was so discreet as to tear up. I had seen his wife and had dared, not meaning any disrespect, to write to him and speak of her beauty—pardon me—and refer to her in what I can see myself was quite too demonstrative a style. But I am an old bachelor, an orphan—a disgruntled, disappointed man, and unbearable. If you will forgive me, my dear madam, I promise to reform."

"Then the letter was about me," began Netta, stammering.

"Yes, madam," said the lawyer, frowning awfully at poor Netta, "I was most unprofessionally diffuse, and—pardon me—raved over your beauty and style in a manner that might have tempted your husband to call me out if I had not been such an old friend of his."

"Oh, it's all right, dear," said Charlie. "I didn't let you see the letter, but tore it up as I came home."

"I saw you," said Netta coolly, but with a radiant face, "and I wondered what you were tearing up so viciously."

"You saw me?" echoed Charlie; "thereby hangs a tale, I imagine. Did you think I had a secret from you, dearest?"

Netta glanced cautiously at the face of the lawyer. It reassured her, and she answered without hesitation.

"You couldn't have a secret from me, Charlie. I shall always trust you. And now perhaps your friend would like a little music," and as her fingers ran over the keys on the piano Netta thought serenely:

"I wonder how I could have been so absurd as to make myself wretched about—that other woman."

ESTHER NOANES.

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AN INDIAN DRUG

BY HUAN MEE,

Author of "The Czar's Diamond," "In Masquerade," "Alan Lindow's Wife," "Philip St. Voullé's Understudy," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

A DEADLY POISON.

ESTLIN GODFRY carefully selected an oblong case from the secret drawer of his writing cabinet, and extracting from it several small bottles, covered with curious Eastern inscriptions in red, yellow, and black characters, similar to those that adorn strips of genuine Indian ink, gazed at them with the eye of a connoisseur.

Gazed at them with the eye of a connoisseur.

Estlin Godfry had only been back in England three weeks, and had devoted that time to the unpacking and arranging of a multitude of curios that he had gathered in India. These he had distributed about his sanctum or had given to intimate friends, and had enlarged and expatiated upon them with the loving eloquence of a traveller, but the tiny little packet he was now examining had not yet been shown to anyone, for the reason that none of his acquaintances in the thriving and populous little town of Maythorn were sufficiently interested in the matter of curious drugs and unique poisons to appreciate a concoction so deadly that instant death was the portion of anyone who should taste a single drop of it.

Why did he purchase it from the Indian Fakir? He did not know, he had no desire or necessity for possessing such a power of life and death, and yet there was a strange unaccountable fascination in having in that tiny glass phial a drug unknown in England; a poison that had no antidote, that brought death sudden, swift, and painless, and left no trace behind, no trace beyond utter paralysis of brain, heart and nerve system. It would be an interesting experiment to test the power asserted to be possessed by this colourless drug that glistened limpid and innocent in the phial.

He had seen animals killed in India by the primitive puff and dart, they had dropped dead almost without convulsion when they were hit, and this, he was told, was the kind of poison that had killed them.

He slipped the bottles in his pocket, and taking his hat and stick left Merton House, the residence of his uncle, Joseph Monro, and went to the town to the shop of his old friend, Walter Shenfield, chemist, a man who was really wasted upon a country town, no matter how large its population, whose constant researches in the fascinating fields of chemistry were carried out merely for his own pleasure, and whose discoveries, small though they were, might with more prominent surroundings have been turned to the benefit of mankind.

As Estlin Godfry traverses the half-mile from Merton House to the town, let us look a little at his career. Adopted by his uncle, Joseph Monro, at the age of five, his early tuition and college education were well looked after, and there had only been one cause of disagreement between the nephew and the

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man who all the gossips rumoured intended to leave him a fortune, and the cause of that disagreement was—a woman. During a stay that Estlin Godfry made in London some two years previously, just at the age of twenty-one, he became enamoured of a lady whose connection with the variety stage was not a recommendation in the eyes of staid Joseph Monro, who at once gave Estlin the alternative of relinquishing all thoughts of an alliance with the lady or of forfeiting the position that he held in his uncle's house, and in order to render the severance from the lady the easier, Monro, in his usual generous way, offered to send Estlin on a trip to India, which had been the long cherished wish of the young man's heart.

After all, the love that Estlin fancied he held for the lady was no more than a transient fascination, and against this was thrown into the scale the fulfilment of a lifelong desire to travel in the East. With genuine thanks he had accepted the offer, and the change of scene and the new life of the Eastern world had removed the infatuation from his mind, a process of obliteration which had been very much assisted by the announcement, in a marked newspaper that reached him, of the marriage of the lady to the good-for-nothing son of a sporting peer.

The shop of Walter Shenfield, chemist by examination, was deserted upon that autumn evening; the demand for pennyworths of violet powder, tooth-brushes or cakes of scented soap had ceased. The enormous red Cyclopean eye that glared as though a warning danger signal of the poisonous drugs in those black bottles with large hooded caps on the top shelves, threw a stream of ruddy light across the narrow pavement.

Walter Shenfield, in the glass screened-off corner of the counter where he compounded prescriptions, was hard at work upon one of his endless experiments, the flame under the fragile test tube was boiling the purple fluid into a sea of bubbles and a golden foam was forming on the top. The eyes of the chemist glistened as the success of this experiment seemed assured, when with a sharp snap the tube cracked, and for the fifth time wrested success from the hand of the experimenter at the very acme of its fulfilment.

With an impatient exclamation he blew out the spirit-lamp, and, glancing at the clock, recognised with satisfaction that it lacked but a quarter of an hour to his usual closing time.

He closed his books, cast aside the damaged tube, replaced various bottles of crystals and acids in their accustomed niches on the shelves, and as he finished, the figure of Estlin Godfry crossed the flood of light, which bathed him for a moment as in a stream of blood, and entered.

"Good-evening, Shenfield."

"Ah, good-evening, Estlin."

"Trade seems dull."

"Beastly dull in this hole; there's no chance for a man of science. He never gets beyond a shilling bottle of physic. If it were not for my experiments, I should go melancholy mad."

"Ah, my boy, you ought to go to India. Bombay, or Calcutta would suit you—and you could get jolly good prices for your stuff. Why a man told me he——"

"No good, my boy, I'm a native plant, not an exotic."

"Well, how are the experiments going?"

"Only pretty well; five times I have tried one combination, and five times just at the very point of success the tube has cracked."

"What is the latest?"

"Oh, another antidote."

"It seems to me a most extraordinary thing, Shenfield, that so much time and trouble, so much research and labour should be devoted to the discovery of antidotes. The obvious moral is, don't take the poison and you won't need the antidote, and if a man wants to commit suicide, why not let him?"

"But accidents."

"Oh, they're rare, and even then nine times out of ten a fellow would be dead before you could give him the needful remedy."

"Well sometimes, but it's an interesting study. Now, you've been to India and no doubt have seen deaths from snake bites; surely you applaud the research that found remedies like strychnine—one poison counteracting another?"

The eyes of the chemist glistened.

"That's all very well, but a man can't carry a chemist's shop about with him on every sporting expedition, and then there are poisons so fatal that there is no time to administer any antidote—the man takes them—accident or design, or it may be a wound from a poisoned weapon and it's all over."

"Myths, my dear boy. Myths, nearly all of them, there's sure to be an antidote—only you've got to find it."

"Well now, look here, Shenfield," and Estlin produced three curiously inscribed bottles from his pocket, "here's some stuff I got in India—why the deuce I bought it I don't know, unless it was to give it to you. The copper-faced heathen who sold it assured me that as little as could be conveyed on the point of a pin was instant and painless death." Estlin handed over the bottles to Shenfield who cautiously removed the skin covering the cork of one and opened it.

"Do you really believe it?" he asked at length after a careful scrutiny of the fluid as if he almost expected it to announce its deadly nature.

"Well, I don't know. Try it!"

"What!"

"Not on yourself. Try it on a mouse or a rabbit. You're pretty fond of experimenting upon those little animals. Really, Shenfield, I believe you're callous enough in the pursuit of science to go in for vivisection."

For answer Shenfield opened the door leading to the room behind the shop and returned with a diminutive rabbit, which he gave to Estlin to hold.

"Half a minute," remarked the latter, "you'd better shut the shop up first."

While Estlin nursed the victim destined for sacrifice, Shenfield and the boy he employed to take home the occasional mixtures compounded from hereditary prescriptions,

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shut up the establishment, and closed the ruby eye that glared in solitary loneliness across the deserted footpath. The boy, dismissed for the night, went off with a whoop, and the experimenters turned their attention to the rabbit. Estlin held the animal, and Shenfield dipped a thin glass rod into the opened bottle and touched the tip of its tongue with it. Almost instantaneously the animal became rigid and its heart seemed to cease its beating. Estlin, with a perceptible gesture of repugnance, laid the little body down upon the counter.

"That's quick enough," he remarked.

"Yes; a deadly poison."

Suddenly, with a convulsive twitch, the rabbit rolled over on its back, tipping over the open bottle as it did so, and spilling the rest of the liquid. It was stone dead.

"He's upset it now," remarked Estlin.

"And a good riddance, too," rejoined Shenfield. "It beats prussic, silly; you had better let me put the other two bottles out of harm's way," and without waiting for consent he took them from the counter and locked them in a small cupboard. Then wiping the counter down with a sheet of tissue paper, he threw it and the empty bottle behind the blazing fire of the inner room.

The dead rabbit was buried in the garden, and the incident soon forgotten, as Estlin recounted some stirring episodes of his Eastern trip, to which the chemist listened with attentive ears.

CHAPTER II.

Found Dead.

It is the day of the wedding, the day upon which Miss Ethel Sedwicke is for ever to throw aside the name she has held for some twenty-five years, and become Mrs. Monro, and the heir expectant until to-day, Estlin Godfry, is surprising even his greatest admirers with his geniality, and evident satisfaction at the whole proceedings.

Estlin gazes anxiously at the unconscious figure.

He is "a good fellow," so everyone owns, and seems to have no more thought of the fortune that is passing away from him than he has for cigarettes which he lights regularly every five minutes, places down for a moment, and then forgets altogether.

Not a spark of jealousy or temper is apparent in his manner, although, as is patent to everyone, this wedding must make so grave a difference in his position.

Up to the time his uncle met Miss Ethel Sedwicke he had been his adopted son, and his guardian had made no secret of his intentions.

Estlin was to be a rich man, his uncle's sole heir, and he was therefore to prepare himself for that enviable position by learning the use, and not the abuse of riches.

Nothing that he had reasonably desired in his youth had been denied him, and never had they quarrelled upon the point of money, or disputed upon minor matters. Estlin was his adopted son, his heir; he was to fit himself for a Parliamentary career, and satisfy the livelong desire of his uncle. So it had always been understood, and Joseph Monro had laughed to scorn the oft-repeated suggestions of the younger man that a new heir might one day come upon the scene and supplant him in the course of time.

And now. Well, now the unexpected had happened, Joseph Monro had fallen in love with all the fire and ardour of a much younger man, and as the townsfolk whispered to each other, "It was all up with young Estlin." He would find that Merton House was not quite so comfortable a place when under the supervision of a young woman, however pretty she might be, and as the lady critics maintained, a good deal too pretty to be cast daily in the company of Estlin Godfry. The unanimous votes of the ladies' tea-parties of the town had decided this for him a month at least previous to the wedding, and therefore, as naturally follows when ladies take anything in hand, the whole question was settled at once. The people directly concerned in the matter did, nevertheless, exactly as they liked, and, moreover, Estlin seemed as completely satisfied as his uncle and his pretty young *fiancée*.

Still the society of the town of Maythorn had decided that it was very hard upon young Estlin, and, of course, there was no appeal, though everyone seemed to suffer more acutely than those chiefly interested.

"Estlin, my boy," Joseph Monro exclaims, on the morning of the wedding, placing his arm about his nephew's shoulders. "You understand this house must always be the same to you, as in the past, and we must be as we have always been, father and son."

"The house can never be the same to me," Estlin replies, and then, as he notices a shade of sorrow cross his uncle's face, with a laugh continues, "it will be infinitely more attractive with such a charming addition."

"Then you are not jealous, Estlin?"

"Jealous, yes, I am completely overwhelmed; I am jealous of your good fortune."

"And nothing else?"

"Absolutely nothing."

A hearty hand-shake adds weight to his fervent protestation, and then Joseph Monro says:

"I cannot ask you to witness my new will, Estlin, for you are not altogether forgotten, but I have a few words to say to you I would rather say alone, if you will come to my study for a few moments."

Estlin is about to follow his uncle when a sharp professional rat-tat-tat announces the arrival of the first of the invited guests, and in a moment the servant ushers in Monro's oldest friends, Doctor Hill, the best man, and Arthur Grindley, his solicitor.

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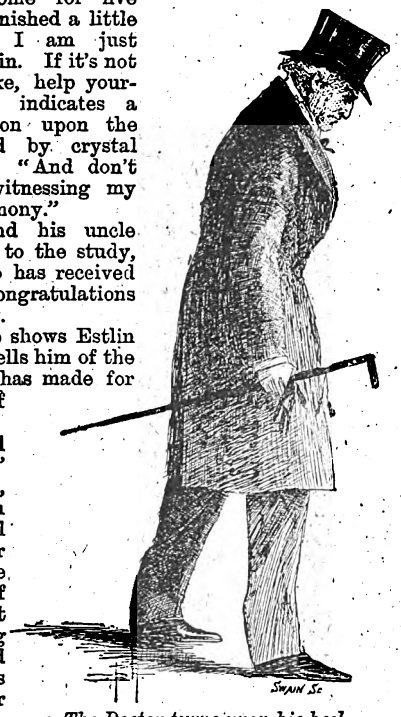
"Ah, good-morning, Benedict; congratulations, since you will do it," is the salutation of the Doctor, who is as confirmed an old bachelor as Maythorn possesses.

"Good-morning, Hill; morning, Grindley; well, make yourselves at home for five minutes till I've finished a little private business I am just settling with Estlin. If it's not too early to smoke, help yourselves," and he indicates a smoker's companion upon the sideboard flanked by crystal bottles of spirits. "And don't forget you are witnessing my will after the ceremony."



The Doctor turns upon his heel.

Then Estlin and his uncle mount the stairs to the study, and Joseph Monro has received the first and last congratulations of his wedding day.

In the study he shows Estlin his new will and tells him of the provision that he has made for him, an annuity of £1,000 a year.

"And now, God bless you, my boy," he says; "leave me, Estlin, and go down and entertain Hill and Grindley for five minutes while I write a couple of letters. I shall not be longer, then bring them up here and we'll have a glass of wine together before we start."

"My uncle," says Estlin, as he re-enters the morning room, "will be pleased to see you in his study to take a glass of wine with him in five minutes' time; he has a couple of letters to write now, if you will excuse him."

The clatter of horses' hoofs and the roll of wheels without announce the arrival of the carriages, and Estlin is detained making final arrangments below, while Hill and Grindley proceed together to Monro's study.

As Estlin stands at the window in the bright morning sunlight several of his acquaintances in the town pass by chatting on their way to the church, and their conversation is of Estlin Godfry, the only loser by that day's festivities. Of course he is remembered in the will, but they have seen this kind of thing before. The middle-aged man marrying the young woman and spending the rest of his life in legalised adoration. Estlin no doubt is still left a considerable sum, but of course, there will be half-a-dozen more wills made before the final one is read and then he'll only get a mourning ring or a paltry fifty pounds. Oh, yes, they have seen this kind of thing before, and the hybrid society of a country town never makes a mistake in its estimation of human nature—Never!

Then the lawyer returns to the morning room, but does not enter; he stands at the door until Estlin, looking his way, walks, in response to his glance, towards him.

"We are quite ready," says Estlin.

"Do you know any woman who is not a fool?" the lawyer asks him in his gentlemanly brusque style, and Estlin ventures to suggest that he has the honour of the acquaintance of such a female paragon.

"Then send her to the bride's house and let her distract her thoughts and quietly tell her that Mr. Monro has been taken unwell and will not be able to leave yet awhile. When you have done that come up to the study."

Estlin rushes out to fulfil the lawyer's instructions, and ten minutes afterwards, trembling and flurried, returns and ascends to the study, only to pause, with his limbs shaking under him, as he sees the two men standing upon the threshold, looking grave and serious, awaiting him.

They step aside to allow him to enter. His uncle is seated in his usual chair, his arms hanging by his side, his collar and tie loosened, and the doctor's stethoscope lies upon the table.

Estlin gazes anxiously at the unconscious figure, and his breath halts at the oppressive stillness. What has happened? He turns again to the two men who have followed him into the room and asks:

"How is he now?"

They do not answer him, and Estlin takes the limp hand in his own.

"He has fainted," he says; "it is excitement. He will soon recover."

"He will never recover," Doctor Hill rejoins. "Your uncle is dead!"

CHAPTER III.

A Mystery.

It is the night of the wedding day, and the bridegroom, who should have left the house with his bride, followed by the hearty wishes of all who knew him, has departed alone upon that cold, dark road, the only path from earth to eternity.

The room where he had laughed and talked that morning is vacant, save for that something lying on the bed. Something covered with a sheet, a stretch of white with hideous elevations at its either end, and that is all.

Suddenly as a lightning flash, the news had spread amongst the invited guests. What use condolences or idle words. The horror of the catastrophe, the greatness of the loss, numbed them to silence; and silence was the best.

In the library three men are sitting, with white faces, in which deep lines show the excess of that emotion which men may not give way to, earnestly conversing.

"He was dead before I entered the room," the Doctor says, addressing Estlin, "it happened in the few moments that elapsed between the time you left him and we followed to his room."

"And this will is now waste paper," the lawyer snaps, picking up the unsigned document from the table.

"It represents his wishes, and shall be the same to me as though it had been made a year ago," Estlin replies gravely.

"Tush, you talk like a boy. His last will in which you are——"

"It is not seemly to discuss this matter now," the Doctor sharply interjects, and Estlin wearily places his hand to his throbbing brow. "There are graver matters which must be settled. It is impossible for me to give a certificate with regard to your uncle's death," he continues, turning to Estlin, "absolutely impossible. There must be an inquiry."

"It will be anguish to his friends," Estlin replies, "let it be kept secret. If he had a weak heart, surely you, as his physician, are justified——"

"For his death to have occurred from heart failure is impossible, or at least so improbable that I cannot consent to take any other course than that which my duty indicates. It is next to impossible that he should die so suddenly from natural causes. He was a strong, healthy man, and one I would have given, knowing him as I did, at least another twenty years of robust life. I say, with the full knowledge of the gravity and importance of my words, he did not die a natural death."

Estlin starts in amazement to his feet, and the lawyer, aroused from his habitual composure, turns and stares open mouthed at the Doctor, who returns the glances of the two with a look of meaning, and tapping the table to emphasise his words, sharply repeats:

"He did not die from natural causes."

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"Not die from natural causes!" Estlin gasps at last. "Doctor Hill, you cannot mean that he——" he stammers and breaks down, and then in a moment slowly continues: "You must explain your words, I cannot understand them."

For answer the Doctor rises to his feet and moves towards the door, turning on the threshold towards the two who gaze at him with faces expressing nothing but bewildered consternation.

"I cannot discuss what are at present simply assumptions," he says stiffly, addressing the younger man, "but I think that I have said sufficient to indicate my intentions. A patient of mine has suddenly died under circumstances of so mysterious a character that I emphatically refuse to pretend to account for a death which to the best of my knowledge and belief should not have occurred. My duty is to make the necessary communications to the proper authorities, and that duty I shall unswervingly carry out. Gentlemen, I wish you good-night." With a formal bow the Doctor turns upon his heel, leaving the two facing each other and completely nonplussed at his behaviour. The legal mind is the first to recover itself.

"You don't look well, but you haven't altered much."

"What the deuce has the old fool got in his head now?" the lawyer gasps. "Surely there is enough misery in the house without the matter being made worse by the madness of a dispenser of castor oil. Bah! the idiotic old fool! but it must be stopped; it shall be, too, or my name's not Grindley. There, there, my dear fellow," he continued hastily, clutching Estlin Godfry's hand, "I must be after him. Heaven only knows what he'll do if I don't stop him," and with a rush he departs, cursing vehemently the whole medical profession, and his greatest friend, Doctor Hill, in particular.

With all anxiety to dissuade him from bringing the family further trouble, the good-natured but irascible lawyer hurried after Doctor Hill; but his pleadings were futile, and understanding at last that the medical man was not acting under any other influence than that of his own impressions and belief, he was reluctantly obliged to content himself with the thought that Doctor Hill was dealing honestly and in good faith, and only doing his duty to his friend who had so mysteriously passed away.

Twenty-four hours have flown before Mr. Grindley meets Estlin Godfry again, and then he has only gained his object by almost forcing himself into the house.

He has been refused admission, but impatiently scorning the message that "Mr. Estlin Godfry is engaged," literally hurls himself into the library where the young man is sitting, weary and worn, a ghost of what he was two days ago.

"My dear Godfry," he snaps, as Estlin wearily rises from his seat, "why shut yourself up like this; you will go mad if you continue in this style much longer."

"Have you heard?" Estlin hoarsely inquires. "Have you heard the horrible news that my uncle was poisoned, murdered? My God, who was the fiend who chose such a moment to strike his blow! Oh, it is horrible, horrible."

"Horrible, yes, but murder, no! It must have been a fearful accident."

"It could be no accident. A man does not play with poisons on his wedding day. It is murder, cruel, heartless, monstrous."

"No, no, my dear Estlin, you are filled with morbid ideas through shutting yourself up so much. Poor Monro must have felt overcome by excitement, taken a sedative to attempt to quiet his nerves, and overdosed himself. There can be no other solution."

"If he had taken a sedative there would have been a phial upon the table, and besides, such drugs do not act in such a manner. They do not mete out death in the twinkling of an eye."

"But your uncle had not an enemy in the world."

"He had one. It rests with us to find him."

"My dear boy, heaven forbid that I should wrong the dead, but——"

"Yes, yes, you would suggest as others do, that it was suicide." Estlin rises and impatiently paces the room. "Does a man who intends to commit suicide wait until the morning of his wedding-day to do the deed? And you were one of his greatest friends."

"It is a mystery."

"The inquest is to-morrow."

"Yes, I have heard. How is she?"

"She! Who can say? She is scarcely conscious of her grief as yet. Oh, what are we to do?"

"Do! We can do nothing. It is one of those mysteries that will never be solved."

"It must and shall be. Leave me, Grindley, leave me; you can do nothing now," Estlin exclaims at last, after a lengthy pause, and the lawyer, sobered and melancholy, can but wring his hand and depart. As he leaves, Estlin again buries his head in his hands and thinks, tortures his brain as he has done for hours, searching for the key to this inscrutable mystery. It is useless. He is brought face to face every time with the terrible facts that seem to defy interpretation. He must give it up; no one will ever solve the mystery. But stay, it flashes upon him as a flood of light. There is one man who may perchance help him. Years ago a man who had chambers in the same building in London as himself. He was not a marvellous detective who could forge a whole chain from a shattered link, for he had neither the patience nor the stability to follow a series of circumstances bit by bit, and yet, by marvellous good fortune, Estlin remembers the man had in the old days so often amused him by instantaneously snapping the answer to a seemingly impenetrable mystery that he had laid before him. It was a gift, not of deduction, but what was more like an exaggerated intuition. The gift of the Gods to woman.

To think is to act, and late that evening Estlin hurries up the stairs of his old chambers, hoping against hope to

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find that his friend Sidney Larrance has not left the neighbourhood.

Busy with his own thoughts Estlin knocks at the outer door, and in a moment finds his arms being nearly wrenched from his body by a ferocious individual attired only in his shirt and trousers, while a hearty voice growing louder with every word ejaculates.

"Estlin Godfry by all that's wonderful!"

In the grasp of the giant, Estlin is dragged into the room, thrust into into a chair, a stiff brandy-and-soda dashed into his hand, and then Sidney Larrance condescends to speak again.

"You don't look well, but you haven't altered much, Estlin. You can guess what I'm about by my costume. More paper staining. The only thing that puzzles me is that editors don't accept my yarns, but then genius must not be trammelled. If I write, let me write with freedom. Do not bind me with collars, coats or vests, let me be free, untrammelled. Free as the wave that beats upon the beach."

Suddenly Larrance pauses and saves himself from suffocation by taking a long deep breath, and then, noticing Estlin has not altered his position and still gazes moodily before him, deals him a Nasmyth hammer-like blow on the shoulder and fiercely asks:

"What's up?"

"Haven't you seen the papers?"

"No, the worst thing a man who writes can do is to read the papers. It lowers his estimation of himself. Either they have not condescended to notice his latest triumph, or they have unmercifully "slated" it. I revenge myself upon them by ignoring their criticisms, and dwell ever in the flattery of my own opinions."

"Sidney Larrance, you're the same good-tempered old cynic as ever."

"Estlin Godfry, I'm neither a cynic nor good-tempered. Simply a selfish old brute who chatters like a fool, when his friend has come miles to ask his opinion on a matter of the greatest moment.

"Forgive me, Estlin, drink your brandy-and-soda like a man, and forget that I've wasted the first five minutes of your time."

"You *know* that I have come to consult you, Sidney? Did you *know* before I arrived?"

"My dear fellow, no. When will you appreciate that I am not a prophet, a soothsayer, or a spiritualist?" He rears his gigantic frame aloft. "Do I look like either? My mother was a woman of the ultra-sensitive type, and I have inherited her neurotic temperament. Nothing more, I assure you.

"Sometimes, I know not how, I can jump at the correct solution to a mystery, but that is all. I know no more of your visit than the paper's opinions of my latest novel.

"But go on, my dear chap, go on; I'm afraid with the nerves I also inherited the family tongue."

For a quarter of an hour Estlin speaks without interruption, and then, as he finished the history of all that has occurred, sits back and anxiously watches his old friend.

He breaks the silence again and asks:

"Can you help me?"

"My dear Estlin, I'm sorry to say 'No.' My mind is at present a blank, but do not despair, I will come back with you and perhaps—" he hesitates, and then slowly continues: "but do not rely upon me. Personally, I am as helpless as you. I do not pretend to possess abnormal gifts of second sight, but by examining the scene of the tragedy something may arise to help us."

He gazes thoughtfully and pityingly at the young man a moment and then, with a sigh, envelopes himself in the remainder of his clothes and a gigantic overcoat, and together they leave the house and walk towards the station.

(To be continued.)

RESULT OF PICTURE PUZZLE COMPETITION.

No. 5.

24	81	70	9	36	79	57	56
72	67	35	78	59	30	6	88
80	26	94	50	83	86	85	14
18	84	1	20	8	44	54	47
32	69	21	60	34	42	13	2
16	52	82	12	41	43	77	64
40	27	17	25	73	01	28	48
63	8	71	37	45	51	99	39
31	11	4	33	22	68	65	62
7	74	29	23	61	94	55	94
87	53	38	9	91	58	69	61

A very large proportion of those readers who entered for the Picture Puzzle Competition (No. 5) announced in *Short Stories* for May 9th succeeded in putting the squares together correctly. It has been decided to award the prize of £10 to the competitor who forwarded the neatest correct solution, and the fortunate person is Mr. Joseph Baker, 9, Argyle Street, Darwen, Lancashire.

The fifty readers whose names appear below have each been sent a gold-plated pencil-case as a consolation prize for the correctness and neatness of their attempt:

G. Somerville, 14, Musard Road, W.
Mrs. Bimnoll, The Cottage, Lyncombe, Torquay.
G. Leake, 9, Greencoat Mansions, Francis Street, S.W.
H. Harris, 21, Genoa Road, Anerley, S.E.
A. Hodge, 1, Springfield Gardens, Upper Clapton, N.E.
Miss Smythe, St. Anne's House, Lewes, Sussex.
A. Buckland, 36, Hanover Street, Peckham.
A. Watson, 27, Dora Road, Small Heath, Birmingham.
Mrs. Peacock, 72, Oxford Street, South Bank, Yorkshire.
Mrs. Pritland, 1, Herbert Terrace, Alexandra Road, Plymouth.
H. Anderson, Naval Ordnance Office, Woolwich Arsenal.
Miss A. Beer, 2, Keppel Terrace, Stoke, Devonport.
J. Cross, 34, Bently Road, Kingsland Road, N.
Miss Swanwick, High Bank, Lymm, Cheshire.
W. Martinnaut, 212, Algernon Road, Ladywell.
Mrs. Jones, 36, Castlewood Road, Clapton Common.
A. Murray, 6, Campbell Terrace, Rodney Street, Hull.
H. Reading, 249, Kingsland Road, N.E.
Miss W. Sparkes, 32, Queensdown Road, Hackney Downs.
Miss F. Bellett, 35, Manor Road, Stoke Newington.
G. E. Fisher, 127, Mornington Road, Leytonstone, Essex.
W. Nichols, 41, Bird-in-Bush Road, Peckham.
H. Noble, Park House, 8, Falkland Road, Hornsey.
Mrs. Ayers, Winchester Villa, 86, Birkbeck Road, Leytonstone.
W. Carey, 124, South Bank, Lister Lane, Halifax.
T. Edwards, 262, Cambridge Road, N.E.
Miss N. Jackson, 7, St. James' Square, Bradford, Yorks.
Miss Hallam, 12, Avenue Road, South Norwood.
A. Clegg, 86, Warren Road, Leyton.
A. Lisle, 9, Maude Terrace, Walthamstow, Essex.
A. Bowles, 35, Western Street, Bradford.
G. Coote, 126, High Street, Guildford.
Mrs. Braud, 9, Newton Road, Urmston, near Manchester.
Miss Passmore, Devon Villa, Saffron Walden.
W. Johnson, 14, Penypeel Road, Canton, Cardiff.
Miss L. Wakefield, Clevemont, Silverhill, St. Leonards-on-Sea.
J. Chapman, Jubilee Cottage, Union Place, Stonehouse, Devon.
Mrs. Porter, 32, Queensdown Road, Hackney Downs, N.E.
J. Alexander, 2, Astbury Road, S.E.
W. Hood, 16, Broadway, Stratford, E.
Miss E. Young, 4, Driffield Road, Bow, E.
E. Howard, 1, Lansdowne Gardens, South Lambeth.
A. Withers, 31, West Wymer Street, Norwich.
J. Hughes, 15, Royal Place, New Cross.
T. Barber, 11, Strand Hotel Buildings, Holywell Street, W.C.
F. Louis, Fairleigh, 33, Thurleston Road, West Norwood, S.E.
J. P. Tucker, 19, Langton Street, Chelsea, S.W.
W. Woolston, 6, Hampden Street, Imperial Park, Beeston, Notts.
Max Raeder, Great Stanmore, Middlesex.

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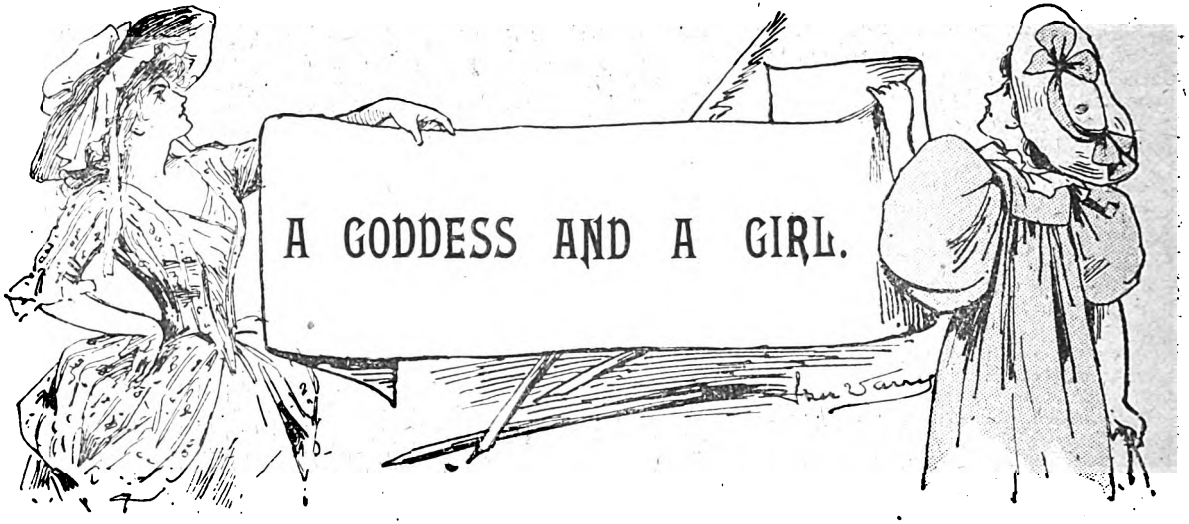

He set his face against the sun, drank through his eyes into his soul the crimson glory, turned his glance to the right, to the left, where wood and sky and a sea of measureless splendour lay; and then, with a rigid, vigorous, upward fling of the arms, called into space:

"I'm done with ye! Shine on in your false, treacherous beauty! Majestic, self-satisfied, supreme as you are, I despise you! No longer can you torment, no longer can you drive your fragrances, your alluring smiles, and your siren music through my veins—for I put you away, I renounce you—I pass on to darkness."

As he turned toward the brink of the precipice and hurried forward with his wild windswept head bent down, a figure pressed through the cool leaves of the wood and barred his progress with a strong, white arm. He raised his face again and met the steady, clear, azure gaze of a woman.

"I hate you!" he snarled.

"Why?" she asked softly. "You never saw me before. How do you conjure up hatred so instantly?"

"You annoy me. You obstruct me. I wish to get on till I pass over the edge of that sharp jaw of rock and fall down to forgetfulness—and peace."

"What an absurd egotist you are," said she, her red lips curling into a disdainful, beautiful smile.

Her word struck him like an icy spray and took the deadly heat out of the passion that was burning through his brain and heart. Standing as he had stood a moment before, scorning the whole earth, casting the contempt of his soul straight at the full beneficence of God; putting behind him, like a martyred hero, the defeats and disappointment of a profitless, dreary, black career, and reeling madly towards death, as a bewildered beast leaps into consuming fire, he had palpitated with desperate, defiant pride. There was then a roaring voice within him that said he had done his best, and said that he had done too well, and that the earth was too mean to comprehend him. He had felt that he was tossing the world aside as a maturing child would spurn a toy theatre, and passing on to an oblivion that was the only possible state of happiness for one of his mental and moral dimensions. And now before him stood a woman, a young woman, with a wide, white brow, quiet, cool eyes, and a voice that was the music of perfect repose. A wave of humiliation swept rather sickeningly through him.

"Who are you?" he muttered.

"Well, call me Patience," she replied. "The name is as good as any."

He looked at her from head to foot. She was like a marble statue, except that a mantle of fluctuant, glistening hair swept in semi-transparent profusion around her shoulders.

"Patience!" he repeated. "Patience!"

"Yes," she returned, smiling, as a rose might smile if it had a heart. "I am known by that name to some. Others have called me—Stupidity."

He brushed the hair back from his eyes and brow, and looked intently upon her. She seemed marvellously white and pure as she faced him there in the sunshine. There was a soft, golden haze mingled in the blue of her eyes, and a moisture lay on her lips like dew on a flower. She clasped her hands behind her head, and gazed through her drooping lashes at this young man who was bent on self-destruction.

"Poor, weak fellow!" she said. "You no longer care to live? You find no beauties here on earth worthy of your admiration?"

"None," he replied.

"Well, well! That long green valley off there, with the sun on it, is not good enough for you. The vast blue and gold of that sky above us bores you. The majestic trees with their glittering multitude of leaves, and with the birds singing rapturously through them are dull, uninteresting things in your eyes. Ah, me, what wonderful men are born! You are a very wonderful man, sir!"

He glared at her.

"You are presumptious to make game of me," he muttered.

She smiled again.

"Are you a poet?" she asked.

"The world says I am not," he replied bitterly.

A little laugh rippled from the woman's throat.

"Unappreciative and deplorable world!" she said. "You have laboured in vain to prove yourself an inspired bard?"

"For eight years," he made reply, "I have sung the best songs that surged within me."

"It was a noble, glorious music that you made?"

"It was the best I knew."

"And it was not victorious?"

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"No."

"Therefore——"

"Therefore—I am weary, and wish to pass from this dream that we call life to that other that is surely sweeter—death."

She turned her eyes away and looked down into the peaceful, radiant valley.

"This is the strength of man," she mused to herself.

He studied the movement of her curved lips angrily.

"Nearly all," she went on, "are like this puny, dejected, limp mortal. They make one strong fight, and then descend to earth and beat their lazy wings with despair. Another race of men must follow this one of cowards and drones. These have not the hearts that deserve the myriad that heaven showers upon them. Humanity is a failure."

She ceased her musings, and again turned to the man.

"It might be better had I advised you to tumble over that precipice, as you were bent on doing. I should judge that you were of no use to yourself or the world, and to silence you would possibly be a boon to mankind. It is however, my duty to guard humans, so far as I can, from the consequences of their own madness. I live on the earth only for the purpose of encouraging moderation, gentleness and common sense, and I am bound to oppose foolhardiness wherever I meet it. Personally I might enjoy abandoning you to your fate, but I must not. So I say to you, go back. Seek once again in the world the contentment and peace of mind that are possible to all. If you have striven eight years to acquire fame, and failed, then smile at your own lack of fortune, and strive eight years more, and then eight years more, and so, on and on, till the hand of death takes yours unsought; and even then smile and thank God that he has been so merciful to one so mean."

She had risen, tall and glorious above him, pointing upward to the arching vault of heaven as she spoke, her eyes dilating, and the firm, commanding force of divinity shining in her face. He cowered under the fierceness of her gaze, shielding his eyes with his arms. When he looked again she was gone. On the low branch of the birch tree, whose leaves had almost touched her golden locks when she stood before him, a bird with a critical brown eye and an opaline throat scrutinised him curiously for a moment and then flew up towards the sun, and he was alone.

He went back to the haunts of men and began life anew.

* * * * *

It was a ball in Mrs. Hooper's house, that great mansion in the square, with a domed ballroom, in which beauty acquired a fairy fineness against a background of white and gold, and garlands of frescoed roses. The dance was at its height when Mrs. Hooper, standing on tip-toe and shading her eyes with a white ostrich fan, gazed in one particular direction for a moment and then uttered a little exclamation. She had discovered someone whose appearance surprised her. It was a tall, pale, good-looking young man who stood on the threshold of the ballroom, and towards whom Mrs. Hooper sped, as a gorgeously-plumaged bird would half fly and run across the lawn.

"Why, you dear fellow," she cried, catching the new-comer's arm. "However did you get here? I had no idea you'd come. Why, you haven't shown yourself at a dance for years."

The young man smiled.

"I've decided to go into the world again," said he. "I'll only look and not dance. I've never been in this new room of yours before. Isn't it beautiful——"

He stopped speaking and caught spasmodically at his hostess's hand, which still lingered lightly on his sleeve.

"Who—is that—that girl?" he whispered.

Mrs. Hooper followed his gaze and laughed.

"Oh, of course she would catch your eye. But, my dear boy! You are positively as white as a sheet."

"Who is she, who is she?" he asked again impatiently.

"Why, Patience Endicott, to be sure."

He turned such a wild gaze upon Mrs Hooper that that lady suddenly feared he was mad, and shivered.

"Patience," he gasped. "My God! Is that her name?"

Mrs. Hooper was now sure that something was radically wrong with him. She dreaded a scene, and cast a quick glance about to see if any trustworthy aid could be summoned without alarming the company.

"What ails you, what is the matter?" she murmured, trying to turn the young man about, with the intention of getting him into the hall. He suddenly seemed to realise he was acting wildly.

"Pardon me," he said in a natural voice. "I owe you an explanation. I have been strangely moved, Mrs. Hooper, by the sight of Miss Endicott. I am quite sure that I never met her, but she is like someone I knew. I cannot explain to you now why the shock at seeing her affected me so. Might I meet Miss Endicott?"

"By all means," laughed the hostess, at once reassured. She hastened over the ballroom floor, with the young poet in her wake.

"Patience, dear, let me introduce an old friend, Mr. Carleton—Geoffrey, this is the nicest girl in or out of paradise, Patience Endicott."

The same azure eyes, suffused with a golden haze and shadowed by long, velvety lashes were turned upon him, and he quailed under their steady, calm gaze.

"We have met before," he found voice to say.

"No, I think not," she replied in even tones, slightly elevating her brows.

"On the brink of a precipice," he went on. "Did we not stand there together one day, not long ago, and you told me I was an egotist?"

"No," she said softly. "The circumstance you mention is wholly strange to me."

He straightened himself and looked down upon her with troubled eyes.

"It is true then," he said sadly, "that I am not myself—that there is something wrong—here," tapping his forehead. "Miss Endicott, it seems to me that my mind is clear, and to me it is all rational and right, when I tell you that I once before now looked on your face, heard your voice, and—thought you sublime. The words you uttered to me swerved me from a terrible purpose and saved me from destruction. It was but a dream—an hallucination—and I am, indeed, in a sad, forlorn condition. My mind has given away—I am mad. And I thought I had found patience."

* * * * *

"Simply brain fever, my dear Mrs. Hooper," said old Doctor Trevelyan, as he warmed his coat tails in front of the fire in the big library. "He was morbid, overworked, and, I think, dissipated. Drank too much brandy, slept about three hours a night, and fairly defied Nature. Oh, that idea of his about the girl? It's nothing at all. It might have been anything else. He might have raved over blue monkeys trying to strangle him, or told you of

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taking a trip along the bottom of the ocean and drinking afternoon tea with a mermaid. That scene with Patience on the edge of the precipice, and the confusing of the figure with your friend, Miss Endicott, was an instantaneous, lightning-like fantasy that flitted across his brain just as he stood looking on the real girl for the first time. Her placid beauty intimidated and awed him. It reminded him of his own fevered state and rebuked himself.

"And yet, by Jove! what a peculiar sermon was in that dream of his! Now that he is all right, I hope that, in his limp and passive condition, he may dwell upon and profit by the beauty of the fine flash of sanity that blazed through his madness. For one instant he saw the futility and unwholesomeness of selfish, ill-regulated, and unbridled ambition, and was made to understand the sweet virtue of patience. My dear Mrs. Hooper, patience is a virtue. We find very little of it in these days. We are living very fast, and the most excitable of us cannot stand the pace. We must all of us beat our neighbours in all that we attempt, or else we grow morose and discontented. This young man was unusually sensitive. He was an egotist, in the highest acceptance of the term. After labouring several years he expected to find the world at his feet, and when he did not accomplish this end, he grew bilious and defiant. Then, through brooding and irregular life, he became ill, and the fever took possession of his brain. Well, he was lucky to have had such care. It was eminently humane of you and your husband to put him to bed here when he fainted in the ballroom. A more practical and less tender woman than yourself would have sent him to a hospital. Good-day, madam. Let no one see the patient, except, perhaps, Miss Endicott."

* * * * *

Upon the side of a russet hill, and overlooking a valley sparkling with frosted verdure, through which a narrow, white river is threaded, is a small stone house with a spacious sweep of verandah on three sides. It is November, and a genial-looking young man in corduroys, who has just clambered down the path of the hill, swings a string of partridges from his shoulder on to a rustic table, stands his fowling-piece in a corner, and calls:

"Hey! You unequalled beauty—where are you?"

There is a light step within the house, a swish of skirts, and a very beautiful woman stands smiling in the doorway.

"Lucky again, Geoffrey," she says, glancing at the heap of birds.

"Always lucky," he replies, advancing to her and throwing his arm about her waist.

"How could I be anything else? You bring me luck. Now, what have you been doing while I was in the woods, you luminous angel?"

"Oh, I've been ruling all the red lines under the stage directions in your manuscript, and I couldn't help reading a lot of the dialogues as I went along, Geoffrey. It's wonderfully bright. The play can't help being a great success."

Geoffrey quietly lighted a cigar, smiling in an utterly contented way while doing it.

"Well, if it fails—what harm? I'm sure I don't care," he said.

He threw the match down the slope towards the valley.

"Failure," he said contemptuously. "Let the madman rave at failure! As for me"—drawing his lungs full of fresh air—"why, the world is mine, because"—crossing to where his wife stood, and taking her hands—"because Patience at last is mine!"

Edith Summers.

RESULT OF FIRST BRAIN GYMNASIUM COMPETITION.

A large number of competitors entered for this competition, and the majority of them came very near answering all the problems correctly. One of the guineas goes to Mr. John A. Read, 1, Florence Villas, Cavendish Road, Merton; the other guinea goes to Mr. W. H. Deeble, 25, Arwenack Street, Falmouth. Consolation prizes in the shape of gold-plated pencil-cases have been sent to fifty of the competitors whose attempts are considered to be sufficiently meritorious.

Key No. 1.

An express train often travels at the rate of sixty miles an hour, and then signals will be passed every four minutes, and it can readily be understood that an engine travelling at that high rate of speed will require constant attention.

Key No. 2.

(*a*) Cap, lap, law, low. 3 moves.
(*b*) Slow, slot, soot, loot, lost, last, fast. 6 moves.
(*d*) Pound, pour'd, pours, pouts, bouts, boats, boars, bears, beans, peans, peons, peony, penny. 12 moves.
(There are other ways of doing these, equally short. They have been counted correct).
(It is not possible to do "c" and "e," under the conditions of the competition).

Key No. 3.

N—ine.
O—bey.
R—oar.
T—ees.
H—ard.
P—ill.
O—pen.
L—imb.
E—arn.

Key No. 4.

1— 9 Mirth.
2—10 India.
3—11 Racer.
4—12 Alter.
5—13 Bukki.
6—14 Ewers.
7—15 Arago.
8—16 Union.

Perimeter... ... Mirabaue.
Hub... ... .. Harrison.

Key No. 5.

Competition.—Numerical Value = 157.

Key No. 6.

MINISTERS
MANKIND
BREAD
ODE
A
ADA
CIDER
VILLAIN
MUTTERING

Key No. 7.

Run—Fifty-two different meanings.

Key No. 8.

Coldstream.

Key No. 9.

(a).

T	R	I	M
R	O	S	E
I	S	L	E
M	E	E	T

(b).

M	E	A	N
G	L	U	M
L	O	R	E
U	R	S	A

Key 10.

"Dear my Lady Golden Hair,
Why averted glances?
Why disfavour, lady fair?
Tell me how it chances."

As she shakes her head there flies
Golden mist that shrouds her eyes;
Still as other rosebud's tips
Stay my lady's folded lips.

"Tell me how I fell from grace,
Tell me where I stumbled,
Oh! do not keep a frowning face,
See how I am humbled!"

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The Brain Gymnasium

No. 4. NEW SERIES.

TWO PRIZES OF A GUINEA EACH.

BELOW will be found the fourth batch of ten problems in the new series of The Brain Gymnasium. Two prizes of a Guinea each are offered weekly to those competitors who answer correctly the greatest number of these problems.

Consolation Prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

Rules:

1. All solutions to be written clearly on one sheet of paper.
2. Do not write the questions; simply put the numbers and the answer against each.
3. Each set to contain the £100 coupon (found on second page of cover) for the current week.
4. All attempts to be in by Monday, June 1st.
5. Mark your envelope "Gymnasium, Number 4."

(31.) Charade.

My first is the meal of a certain cereal boiled.
My second signifies space.
My third is an edible fungus.

(32.) How many words can be made out of "conceivable" without altering the arrangement of the letters? Give the words, and the total against each.

Example: Wards—war, wad, was, as. Four moves.

(33.) The initials and finals of the words defined below spell words which signify:

(*a*) Warbling, (*b*) Bearing leaves like grass.

(*a*) Departure.
The fruit of the oak.
A Jewish doctor.
To snarl.

(*b*) An animal of the dolphin family.
A piece of verse.
A term in music.
A farinacious food.
Pertaining to an inauguration.
A messenger from the Pope.
A leaf inserted between leaves.

(34.) Example: Curtail "a piece of music" and leave "a male child."

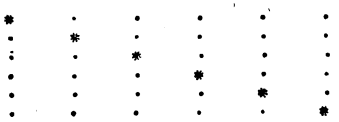
Solution: SON—G.

Solve the following problems in the same way:

1. Curtail "dirty" and leave "fierce."
2. Curtail "yours" and leave "lean."
3. Curtail "a bone" and leave "an expression of surprise."
4. Curtail "a mock pearl" and leave "a fruit."

(35.) Supposing you paid a 1d. for every capital letter on this page; 1½d. for every seven digits; and 1¾d. a dozen for the ordinary letters. How much would you pay for the whole?

(36.) Each of the dots below represents a letter, and those letters which fall on the asterisks will spell a word familiar to our readers.



(37.) The following sentence is written in cypher. Translate it.

Thfrf js cpnsjdfrbbly lfss trpvblf jn brrbngjng b cyphfr sfntfncf thbn thfrf js jn fjndjng b splvtjpn tp jt.

(38.) The following letters, when arranged in their proper order, form three sentences. The punctuation marks are in their correct relative positions.

1. a b c c c e e e e i k k l l n o p r r ' s s t u w y.
2. a a c d d e i j m n o o o r r ' s s t.
3. a a d e e e e e f h h i i l m n o o o r s ' s, t t t u v.

(39.) The following sentence, when reconstructed, forms a readable sentence:

Early delayed by his already long, courier next letter walking on to pouch lett leather quickly, and the destination and more too been this day he was with one in for had he too letter the to reach ought forwarded first be if its it.

(40.) What word on this page has the greatest numerical value?

i = 20. j = 50. m = 1. d = 47.

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The Rural Postman.

I.

He was a fine young fellow. Big, strong, and well built, he carried his head high—a head as fair as that of a child, with frank and direct blue eyes, a mouth around which a smile always played, and a red moustache jauntily turned up at the ends.

Everyone saluted him, as he passed, with a nod or a friendly "Good-day," and the peasants often invited him into their cottages to eat a morsel and to drink a glass of their light wine. He ate and drank standing, with his eyes fixed on the clock that was rarely missing from the sitting-rooms; and when it was time to go, he would always set out with a song on his lips.

Everyone knew him and everyone liked him, from Mougy to Salves; and when people spoke of him, they said: "He is a brave man."

And so he was. An army medal, as brilliant as on the day that he received it, glittered on his chest, throwing, as it were, a ray of glory upon the humble blouse of the rural postman. He was proud of it, too! At any rate, it showed the world that he had served his country, and that it was away in some far land, in battle, that he had lost his right arm. For he was maimed, poor fellow, and the sleeve of his blouse, doubled up, stopped just at the height of the medal.

"Good-day! Good-day!" the country folk cried to him when they saw him pass their house or their field. It was always a kindly greeting, and the brave fellow well deserved it.

II.

It is a hard life, a rural postman's; and when one thinks of it one pities the fate of these unfortunate men, who, in all weathers and all seasons, through the heat of summer and the cold of winter, up hill and down dale, traverse the woods and the ravines, climb the mountains, and sometimes cover miles at a stretch in the sweltering heat or the driving snow in order to carry to some cottage a bit of paper which takes up so small a space in their haversack.

It is a hard life, indeed, and withal so ill-paid. Some £30 or £40 a year with which to keep from starving, and for that to walk from morning till night, growing foot-sore, tearing oneself with the brambles in the wood, heating one's blood in the fire of June and freezing it in the frosts of January.

Well, in spite of all its drawbacks, Pierre Ladello loved the life, and would not have changed it even had he been offered double the salary for less toilsome work. He loved it, and nothing frightened him—neither the rain which soaked him to the skin, nor the snow which enveloped him in its shroud, nor the wind which hurled itself against him; he feared nothing, he dreaded nothing.

The reason was that, half-way between Salves and Mougy, there stood a little red-tiled house, a poor, isolated building, on the threshold of which a sweet-faced girl awaited him as he passed on his rounds. He always entered the house and rested a few minutes in the sitting-room, which was shady and cool in the summer and in the winter filled with a brightness shed from the hearth. He would talk a few moments with the mother kiss the girl on the forehead, and then set out again.

She was his *fiancée*. They were to be married one fine day in the coming April—the month that fills the trees with song, and gives to the delicate wild roses their dawn-coloured dress. And they looked forward to this sweet month of April with great impatience, they spoke of it in all their vows, and already formed many projects for the future.

How happy they would be in their humble home! They would have more of joy than the rich and powerful, for they would possess peace of heart, tranquility of mind, and their mutual love. Despite their poverty they would not suffer; the good God Who watches over all His creatures, from the highest to the lowest, would come to their aid. With His help work would not fail them, and He would recompense them according to their worth. At night they would rest from the fatigue of the day's journey and the day's work, with a grateful hymn of praise in their hearts and a prayer on their lips.

All this would come at the time when Nature renewed herself, in the first month of the spring, which made the flowers grow, and the name of which sounded in their ears like delicious music:

April! April!

III.

April returned and cried abruptly: "Behold me!"

At once, in order to make way for him, the snow which still covered the country disappeared, and he could at his pleasure throw flowers among the grass, hang up nests in the trees, and laughingly show his suncrowned head above the spring foliage.

He brought with him the grateful warmth which gave comfort to man, and made the plants grow, and he put more music still in the hearts of Pierre Ladello and his promised bride.

You should have seen with what nimble steps the rural postman now covered the roads, freed at last from the frost and ice, and with what a radiant smile Suzanne received him. They were to be married at the end of the month, and already the young girl was making her wedding dress—a beautiful dress of blue cashmere, to the body of which she meant to pin a spray of orange blossoms. Pierre had ordered a new suit which would afterwards serve him for Sundays and holidays.

And the mother prayed to God from the depths of her heart to bless their projects and their coming union.

IV.

But the April they had awaited with such impatience came to bring mourning. One day Pierre arrived later than usual at the residence of his *fiancée*. If the sun

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had made the flowers grow, it had also melted the snows, and now the streams were converted into little rivers. One of them in particular, which ordinarily ran dry, was suddenly swollen at this point to such an extent that the rural postman had had to make a wide detour. He found Suzanne anxious because of this involuntary delay on his part. She did not even smile in her customary fashion; that was due, no doubt, to the fact that, having spent more time *en route*, he could now hardly stay a moment by her side.

One kiss only for his *fiancée*, and already he was off again. Must he not arrive exactly at the hour fixed for the arrival of the courier? As it happened, he had only one letter to carry, but it was pressing, and had been paid for.

"Here, my boy!" an old peasant had cried, as the postman had passed his house, "take that for me, will you? You will save me a journey to the town."

"Very well, father Marienne."

"And take care that no one steals it on the way. There's a good bit of money inside, you know," he continued, handing Pierre the envelope, on which the address was scrawled in a bad handwriting.

"Oh! Don't be afraid!" replied the postman. "There are no brigands in this neighbourhood that I know of, and besides, I have my toy. See."

He showed a revolver, which never quitted his side during his long rounds.

"That's right!" said the peasant. "That satisfies me. To-night, when you return, you shall have a drink; I will wait for you. Ah! I forget. It is sure to reach early to-morrow, that letter?"

"Yes, certain."

"It's for my son, you see."

"That will be all right," was the postman's reassurance.

And he left with this one letter in his leather pouch, walking more quickly, for he had already been delayed too long, and the letter ought to be forwarded on by the first courier if it was to reach its destination early the next day.

V.

SUZANNE watched him afar off. She loved him so much, this dear creature, that in spite of his disablement, no man was so handsome in her eyes; and she thought "Soon I shall be his wife!" with an indescribable joy.

All at once a resounding cry reached her ears.

Pierre heard it too, far he turned round quickly, thinking, perhaps, that it came from the house; but, seeing Suzanne at the door, he continued on his way, still listening.

Hardly had he advanced a few steps when another cry, a despairing call for help again arrested him, and he asked himself whence it came.

But Suzanne was already running towards the stream that passed near the house, and of which one could see the footbridge in the neighbouring meadow.

"Pierre! Pierre! It's here!"

He rejoined her in less than two minutes, and both leaned anxiously over the water, which had become muddy and deep at this spot, and very rapid.

"Well," he said, "someone cried out. Perhaps it was not here."

"I am sure the voice came from this side," she replied; "and—look!—see, there, Pierre, what is that floating on the water? It looks like—it is a hat!"

He leaned more forward still, and, with the aid of a switch, succeeded in drawing up out of the water a child's hat, which Suzanne at once recognised.

"Ah! good Heavens!" she murmured. "It is little Toine Marchand who has fallen in. I saw him pass just now, and I know this is his hat. But, what are you doing, Pierre? Are you going to——"

He did not give her time to finish the sentence.

"Take my bag, quick, Suzanne, and carry the letter on if necessary," he said. "I am going to save the child."

Before she could even hold him back or cling to him—for it was a real danger for Pierre to hazard himself thus, maimed as he was—he threw himself into the water without reflection, with this one idea present to his mind—he must save the little one.

Could he reach him! Ah, yes, he did that; but how to remount to the surface, with one arm missing and the other paralysed by the grip of the struggling child.

If only he had two arms! He wrestled, made superhuman efforts; but the child, in the spasm of agony, perhaps, clutched, clutched! The unfortunate young man could not even make him lose his hold, and felt his strength going. He was exhausted, and was being carried away by the current.

"Help! Help!" cried Suzanne.

But the countryside was deserted, the houses were far off, and no one heard her.

"Help!" she repeated.

Alas!

She remained there, with her terrified eyes fixed on the water, and counted the seconds by the beating of her heart. But the seconds—the minutes, succeeded each other, the time passed on, and her unfortunate lover did not come to the surface.

Then, thinking that perhaps he would re-appear farther down, she commenced to run along the bank of the swollen stream.

"And—the bag?" she thought suddenly.

She retraced her steps, and picking it up, pressed it to her bosom, to cherish the warmth that is still retained of the beloved body that had now disappeared. Then she resumed her hopeless quest.

By-and-bye, as she met nobody who could come to her aid, and as she could no longer deceive herself as to the fate of Pierre, she ran on, almost without stopping, to the town; and the clerks at the little post-office saw her enter among them, her appearance scared and her eyes haggard.

"Here!" she said, holding out the bag. "There is a letter inside that Pierre spoke to me about; it is paid for, as—as he is dead—drowned. If I had not brought it, they—might have thought—perhaps, that he was—gone with—this letter. I—did not want—them to think that!"

They made her sit down, they questioned her, they endeavoured to reassure her; and, the alarm being given, a search was at once made, which resulted in the discovery of the unfortunate young man's body not far from Mougy; and that of the child Toine as well, for the boy still clung to the arm of the drowned man.

It is some years since this happened. Suzanne still lives, but she remains faithful to the memory of her dead lover; and in the house where he stopped each day as he pursued his rounds, she grows old, religiously guarding in the depths of her heart the remembrance of the poor rural postman.

JEAN BURANCY.

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The Wythecombe Mystery

By JOHN K. LEYS, *author of "The Tenth of June," etc., etc.*

SUMMARY.

WHILE on a sketching tour in Wales, LAUNCELOT VERE gets into a dangerous position on the face of a precipice. His life is saved by WINIFRED DENVERS, to whom he becomes engaged. On the wedding morning LAUNCELOT fails to put in an appearance at church, and no news can be heard of him. Miss UNWIN, the village schoolmistress, has disappeared at the same time. HAROLD KENYON, a friend of LAUNCELOT'S, determines to leave Wythecombe in search of his friend.

KATHERINE DALE, A young lady with whom HAROLD KENYON is in love.
PAUL SHENSTONE, Engaged to KATHERINE DALE.
REV. MARK DENVERS, Rector of Wythecombe, and WINIFRED'S father.

CHAPTER III.

THE SEARCH BEGINS.

HAROLD KENYON was a thorough Englishman—plain featured, though of pleasing expression, stoutly built, energetic, unimaginative—a complete contrast to his friend, Launcelot Vere, and both in appearance and (in many points) in character, a contrast to him. They had known each other first in London, when Vere was a poor and struggling artist. The young painter's better fortune dated from an acquaintance he had formed with a Mr. Pascoe, a wealthy man who had known Vere's father. This Mr. Pascoe was now dead; but he had been of great service to the artist, taking him down to stay at his house at Richmond and paint pictures for him there, and introducing him to his friends, men of substance, who occasionally purchased Vere's canvases.

To write a hurried note to Miss Dale.

Kenyon remembered those bygone days as he strode along towards Miss Unwin's cottage; and he remembered, too, that never once had he heard this woman's name from his friend's lips. But seeing that (according to Shenstone's account) Vere certainly knew her, this was not much to build upon. It was the fact that the two had disappeared almost simultaneously that troubled Kenyon.

His face was grave when he knocked at Miss Unwin's door. It was graver still when he turned away. The schoolmistress had left home suddenly on the Tuesday morning, leaving the assembled children to wait for her in vain. She had given no notice of her intention to anyone; and she had taken with her the greater part of her belongings. Surely, thought Kenyon, if she had been called away for any legitimate reason she would have sent a message to the Rector.

Kenyon only remained in the village long enough to write a hurried note to Miss Dale.

"I am going up to town this afternoon," he wrote. "If possible I shall be back by Sunday, and as soon as I return, I will call and tell you what I have done. Of course, if I hear any good news, I will telegraph immediately."

"Good news!" he said to himself as he sealed his note. "What good news can I expect? Either Launcelot is dead or seriously ill, or he has played the part of a scoundrel."

For a few seconds he stood with the sealed note in his hand, wondering whether it was not taking a liberty to send it. Kenyon's relations with Miss Dale were somewhat peculiar. When he first met her he had been greatly struck, not merely by her beauty, but by her manner and bearing. There was nothing haughty, still less anything affected, about the girl; yet she seemed to belong to a sphere quite above that in which she was placed.

Unknown to himself, Harold was already deeply in love with her when he learned that she was engaged to be married to Paul Shenstone. From that time he had avoided meeting her, yet they had occasionally seen each other; and once—once only—Harold had seen a look in her face which made his heart beat as if it would suffocate him—a look which seemed to tell him that if he had wooed her before her hand was promised to another, he might have won her.

But after that day she had treated him with a marked coldness; and he hardly knew whether she would not be displeased at his writing to her. Yet she was his only channel of communication with Miss Denvers, for he did not know the family at the Rectory, though he was acquainted with the Rector; and he was anxious that Launcelot's bride should know that something was being done to clear up the mystery that had darkened her life.

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So he despatched the note and set out for Darnport at once. He had only time to throw some things into a portmanteau, snatch a few mouthfuls of food, and catch the afternoon express for London.

Early next morning Kenyon rang the bell of a house in Cumber Street, the house in which Vere had rented a flat. He hardly expected to learn any news of his friend, but he thought he might possibly find in his rooms something that would give a hint as to what had become of him.

Vere had not come back, nor had he sent any letter or telegram.

The deserted studio was in the utmost disorder—pictures, draperies, packing-boxes, and "properties" were huddled together in confusion.

"At least," said Harold to himself, "this does not tell of a premeditated flight."

In the sitting-room things presented much the same aspect; and after some hesitation Kenyon began to search for something—anything—which would help to throw light upon his friend's disappearance.

A large leather portmanteau lay in one corner half-packed. That, thought Kenyon, seemed to make it clear that there had been no elopement. But then he noticed, shortly afterwards, that a smaller bag, which had often accompanied Vere and himself in their holiday rambles, was missing. This looked odd.

The bookcase was almost stripped of its contents; but on a shelf where it had evidently been concealed when the books were in their places, Harold noticed a large phial. He took it down, uncorked it, and smelt it. It had contained laudanum.

For one moment the wild thought troubled him—could Vere have destroyed himself? Then he remembered that a year or two before Vere had told him that he had been suffering a great deal from neuralgia, and had been in the habit of taking opium to deaden the pain; but had, after a struggle, given it up, because the drug was gaining too great a hold on him. Most likely, thought Kenyon, the phial was a forgotten relic of that period. Its appearance proved as much, for it was covered with dust.

On another shelf Harold found an empty case, lined with red velvet. It looked as if it had been made for a revolver. He closed the case, and put it aside, and then turned to the writing-table. Among the various objects that lay scattered over the table was a small pocket diary. This he snatched up eagerly. The day that had been fixed for the wedding was marked with a cross. But there were no entries that seemed likely to be of any service, except one. In the division marked *Tuesday*, in the same week Launcelot had written: "*Beaumont, 8 p.m.*"

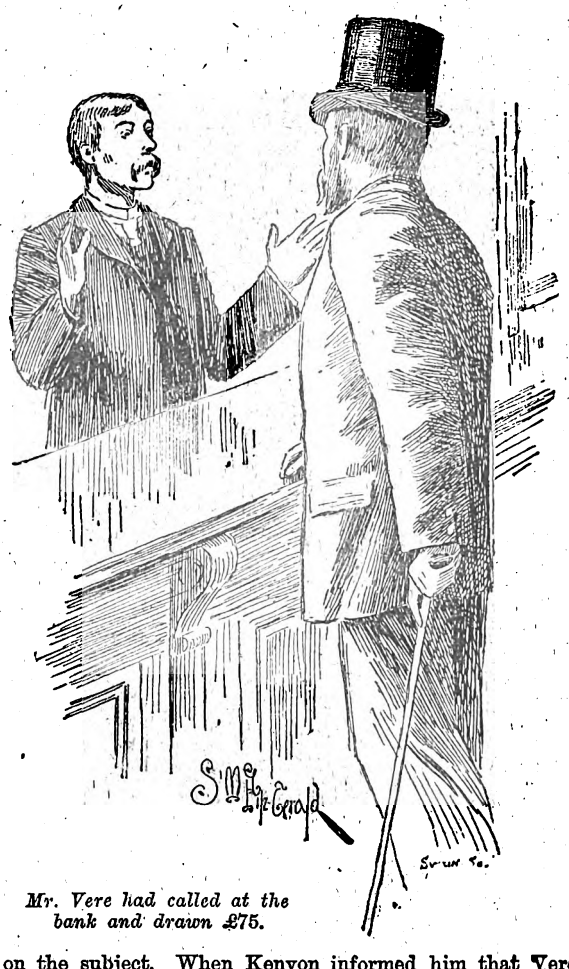
Kenyon thought he had heard his friend speak of an acquaintance named Beaumont. He fancied he was a solicitor, or a solicitor's clerk. But the diary contained no hint of the business which was to be the subject of the interview that Tuesday night, nor any clue to Beaumont's address. However, Kenyon made up his mind to see this man. He slipped the diary into his pocket, and began hunting among the papers that were strewed about the table. Not one of them was of the slightest importance; not one of them gave the smallest hint of any intention on Vere's part to take any extraordinary step.

After a moment's hesitation Harold tried the drawers of the writing-table. They were all unlocked, and the few papers they contained revealed nothing.

There was nothing more to be done; but before going away Kenyon questioned the people of the house a second time. All they could tell him was that Mr. Vere left the house on Tuesday afternoon about five o'clock, without saying where he was going or when he would return. He had no luggage with him. He wore the ordinary morning dress a gentleman wears in London; and he also had on a light grey overcoat, as it was a wet afternoon.

Kenyon stowed away these scanty details in his memory, and having left his address that a telegram might be sent to him the moment anything was heard of the missing man, he drove straight to Scotland Yard.

The case was duly entered, but the superintendent on duty did not feel called upon to offer any advice or remarks



Mr. Vere had called at the bank and drawn £75.

on the subject. When Kenyon informed him that Vere had been on the eve of his marriage when he disappeared, he nodded sagaciously, as much as to say that that fact might of itself account for everything. But when Harold went on to inform him that a young woman who had been living in the village where the marriage was to have taken place, and who was known to Vere, had left her home at the same time, the superintendent's features relapsed into a grin.

"Seems to me that may be the explanation of the gentleman's conduct, sir," he remarked with a confidential air.

"There is nothing to show that the two events are connected in the slightest degree," said Harold sharply.

"There is nothing to show anything as yet," remarked the official. "But take my word for it—if you hunt for the young woman and find her, you'll find the young gentleman not far off."

Shenstone's words came back to Kenyon's mind. The policeman had put the thing more coarsely; but it was evident that it would be absurd to resent the insinuation.

"I know Mr. Vere, and I am sure you are wrong," he said quietly. "Will you see that a description of the missing gentleman is sent to all the police stations?"

The superintendent promised that this should be done, and added that it would be well to visit the hospitals.

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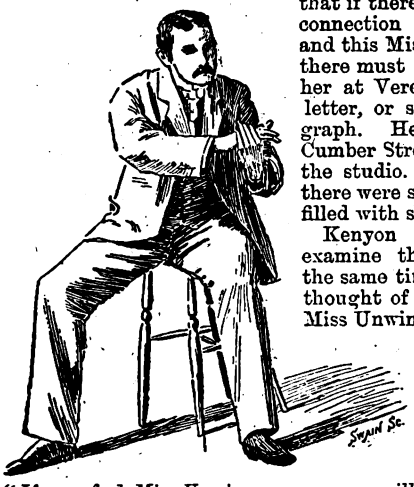
This Kenyon had already resolved to do. He visited the nearest hospitals and telegraphed to the others. But it was all in vain. Vere had not been admitted to any of them; and when he had ascertained the fact Kenyon hardly knew whether he should be glad or sorry. In spite of himself he was beginning to think that Shenstone and the superintendent of police might perhaps be right. Miss Unwin might have had a hold on Launcelot which he could not shake off. She might have learned some secret of his, and insisted on his marrying her as the price of her silence. But it was all dim conjecture—fruitless guessing.

In the afternoon Kenyon called at the bank at which Vere kept his account, where he learned that on the Tuesday morning Mr. Vere had called at the bank and drawn £75, which sum was paid to him in gold and notes.

"That looks as if he had not run away; the sum is too small to last any time," said Kenyon to himself as he left the bank, "and yet, I don't know, he might think it enough for the time being."

As Harold turned his steps westward it occurred to him that if there really was any connection between Vere and this Miss Unwin, surely there must be some trace of her at Vere's rooms—some letter, or sketch, or photograph. He went back to Cumber Street, and entered the studio. In one corner there were several portfolios filled with sketches.



"If you find Miss Unwin . . . . you will find our friend, too."

Kenyon set himself to examine them, wishing at the same time that he had thought of inquiring what Miss Unwin was like. Two of the portfolios were full of sketches of landscapes. But the third contained a series of heads in outline. Amongst them Kenyon came across a sketch which struck him as being remarkable.

It was the head of a woman—not a girl, but a woman of, perhaps, five or six and twenty. It was a singular face—very long for its breadth, dark, handsome, yet not altogether pleasing. The eyes looked out from under heavy eyebrows; there was a severe look, that was also one of pain, about the mouth. The next sketch Kenyon turned over was a drawing of the same head. The attitude was different, but the face was the same. The next sketch to that, and the next, and the next presented the same features. Nor was this all. Among the pictures Kenyon found a carefully-finished portrait of the same woman. It was easy to see that it was a good likeness, and that much labour had been spent on it. The dark eyes looked as if they held some painful secret. One hand—not plump and smooth, but thin and muscular—rested on the breast, as if it were crushing down some words that were not to be uttered. Was this a portrait of Miss Unwin? "If so," said Harold to himself, "she is no common woman."

After thinking a moment he selected one of the sketches, wrapped it up, and carried it away with him.

There remained one person who must be seen—Mr. Beaumont, the man whose name Vere had jotted down in his diary.

This gentleman's name was in the law list—Kenyon's memory had been accurate on that point—and he had an office in the city. But it was too late to call there that night. There was nothing for it but to wait till the next day, and Kenyon spent the night at the Great Western Hotel.

Next morning he presented himself at Mr. Arthur Beaumont's office. He was not kept waiting. Mr. Beaumont was too young a lawyer to have many clients.

He was a short, stout, florid young man, with small brown eyes, a rough yellow moustache, and a wide mouth. He remembered his engagement with Mr. Vere very well. But Mr. Vere had not kept it. He was rather surprised, he added, that the appointment had not been kept.

"May I ask why?" put in Kenyon.

"Well, you know," said Mr. Beaumont with a little nervous laugh, "the fact is, your friend and I belong to the same club; and one night he won some money from me at poker."

Kenyon gave a slight start.

"Oh, you needn't be alarmed! It was only a matter of ten pounds. Vere is no gambler in the proper sense of the word. But I wanted my revenge; and Vere said he would come to my rooms on Tuesday evening and let me win my money back if I could. I was surprised that he did not turn up, that's all."

"You have not seen him since?"

"No, as it happens, I have not."

"You are aware, of course, that he was to have been married last Thursday?"

"Married? No! He never told me."

Harold's heart sank within him as he heard this.

"You are an intimate friend of Vere's, I suppose?" asked the lawyer.

"I think I may say I am his most intimate friend. But I have not seen much of him for the last two years. Perhaps you can tell me——. Did he ever speak to you of a Miss Unwin?"

Mr. Beaumont's face changed. Harold saw it and his heart again misgave him.

"I see you know the woman's name," said Harold.

"I do know her name," said the other, speaking slowly and keeping his eyes fixed on a paperknife which he was twirling in his fingers, "but I'm afraid I can say no more."

A pang shot through Kenyon's breast. Vere had told him nothing of Miss Unwin. This new friend had, apparently, been told everything.

"He told you——?"

"I fear I must ask you to excuse me, Mr. Kenyon," said the lawyer decisively.

"But surely if you can throw any light on his disappearance——"

"His disappearance?"

"Don't you know that he has not been seen or heard of since last Tuesday?"

"Impossible!"

"But it is true."

"I never heard of it. How could I?"

"I forgot. I ought to have told you. But it is true. His marriage was fixed: the bride was actually at the altar. He never came. He has disappeared, without saying a word to any one, without leaving a trace behind him. And—and Miss Unwin has disappeared also—at the same time—on the very same day!"

"Ah!"

"*Now*, Mr. Beaumont, will you tell me what you know?"

"My dear sir, I know nothing—absolutely nothing!"

"I don't suppose that you know where they—where either Mr. Vere or Miss Unwin is to be found," said Harold; "but you know something of the footing on which they stood with regard to each other. You are aware that Vere was well acquainted with this girl?"

"Yes, I knew that."

"Do you think it likely that they have eloped together?"

"Well," answered the lawyer, with a smile, "neither I nor anyone else can speak with certainty on such a point; but if you ask me what I think——"

"Yes?"

"I think that if you find Miss Unwin—isn't that the lady's name?—you will find our friend, too."

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The superintendent's opinion, given almost in the superintendent's own words!

Harold paused a moment.

"If I thought *that*, I should trouble myself about him no more," he said; "but I do not believe it."

Mr. Beaumont smiled.

Harold did not like his smile. But there was no more to be said. He left the lawyer's office, and went to Scotland Yard.

The police had learned nothing.

Weary and dejected, Harold went back to Paddington, and set out on the return journey to Darnport.

CHAPTER IV.

An Unwilling Bride.

"Surely I have waited long and patiently, Kate," said Paul Shenstone to his betrothed.

"Not very long—it is not so long since we were engaged," she answered.

"It seems a century to me. You said last May that our marriage might be in September."

"I—I thought so then; but I could not be married while Winnie Denvers is suffering such an agony of suspense. Poor girl! It is pitiful to see her."

"But if Launcelot Vere chooses not to return at all, am I to lose you altogether?"

"You know very well I did not mean that."

"But you promised me that you would fix some day in September. 'The latter half of the month or towards the end'—these were your very words."

"Yes; but—but I did not think you meant to hold me to them so strictly. We have made no preparations, or hardly any."

"That does not really matter. The great thing is that we should be married."

Kate did not answer.

"I thought you had some respect for your word," said Shenstone, piqued at her silence.

The girl's face flushed at this; yet she did not seem angry. In truth she was too much preoccupied, too anxious, to get angry.

"Mr. Shenstone," she began.

"Mr. Shenstone!" echoed her lover, in a low tone of protest.

Kate disregarded it.

"You must surely have noticed a change in me lately," she went on, her face blushing as she spoke. "The truth is, I do not wish to marry. I would rather—much rather—remain as I am. You know I look on an engagement as a very serious thing, only inferior in sacredness to the marriage tie itself. I do not think that, as a rule, one can be justified in breaking a promise of that kind simply because one's mind has changed. But I confess that I do not love you as I ought—as a wife ought to love her husband. The fault, I admit, is entirely mine. You have never failed in your duty to me—never given me the slightest cause to reproach you in any way. But—oh, Mr. Shenstone! I do wish you would release me from my promise!"

Kate's hands were clasped on her lap, and a proud yet supplicatory look was on her face.

Her lover had turned very pale. He opened his lips; but no word came from them. When he did speak, his voice was low and soft.

"I do wish you would release me from my promise."

"Kate," he said, "we have talked of this before. It seems a pity to recur to the subject. I told you that my very love for you prevented my giving you up voluntarily. It seems to me that it is not fair to ask it. Of course, I am in your hands. I cannot force you to marry me. But really I fail to see the difference between deliberately breaking your promise, and pressing me to give you leave to break it. I love you too well, Kate—I cannot give you up."

The girl made no reply. She sat still, with her hands clasped in front of her. She dared not say a word, for fear of bursting into tears.

Shenstone went on, speaking yet more gently.

"I cannot pretend to be ignorant of the reason for the change in you. But I am convinced that——"

A look from Katharine stopped him. Almost immediately, however, he resumed. It took a good deal to abash Mr. Paul Shenstone.

"Your mother—any person of experience, will tell you, my dear, that the one cure for all those fancies is to get married. If only you would allow me to fix a day! Shall we say the first of October?"

"I am afraid, Paul, our marriage will not be a happy one," said Katharine.

"I think you are mistaken. At all events, nothing shall be wanting on my side to make it a happy one for you. Do you not believe that I love you?"

"Yes; I do believe it."

"Then I will be satisfied with as much as you can give

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me in return. Love will come after marriage; and it will be a far more solid and enduring affection than the kind of thing that often goes by the name."

Kate saw that it was useless to prolong the struggle. She was beginning to understand that one might as well try to upset Snowdon as to turn Paul Shenstone from his purpose. Unless she were to violate her promise, she must yield to him.

"Will you promise me, dearest, that our marriage will take place in the first week of October?" he asked after a few seconds.

"Oh, no, no! Not so soon as that."

"Some time in October, then? You consent? Thank you, dearest. May I say in the first half of the month?"

"No—yes—if you wish it—what does it matter? What difference can a week or two's respite make?" was her unspoken thought.

This conversation had taken place in Mrs. Dale's garden. Shenstone, having gained his point, moved towards the gate; and as Kate saw one of the Rectory servants approaching, she walked on to meet her, thus avoiding a *tête-a-tête* parting with her betrothed. The girl had been sent to say that Miss Winifred would be glad if Miss Dale could come up to the Rectory for half-an-hour.

These messages had been frequent during the last three days. Katharine was so strong, so patient and sympathetic, that Winnie leant upon her, as she could lean on no one else.

Winnie knew that her father loved her dearly; but she could with difficulty keep from showing how his presence, the mere sound of his voice, was to her like a blister on a tender skin. The same thing was true, to a less degree, even of her mother and sisters. They all execrated Vere, and she knew it. They all looked upon her and treated her as the victim of a false, unworthy man. It would have been greater kindness to assume that some misfortune had overtaken him—that Winnie was to be comforted, but not pitied as one who had barely escaped being married to a scamp.

"Kate," she said, "this suspense is more than I can bear."

Kate never made this mistake. She never spoke as if Launcelot were in any way to blame for disappearing as he had done. Indeed, she spoke but little to Winnie at any time. The poor girl seldom cared to talk. It seemed enough for her to sit with one of her friend's hands in her own, sometimes gazing wistfully in her face.

"Kate," she said, as Miss Dale came to her that afternoon, "this suspense is more than I can bear. It will drive me mad. Do you think—he can be *alive*, Katie? Don't you think, dear, if he had been alive, he would have written to me?"

"Certainly, if he could. But you know, my dear, he may be alive, and yet not able to write. I have been thinking—perhaps he met with an accident and was picked up and carried, not to a hospital, but to the house of some charitable person to be nursed. He may be quite unable to write and yet not seriously injured."

"Do you think so, *really*, in your heart? But surely he might have got the nurse or some one to write for him."

Kate sighed, and pressed her friend's fingers in silence.

"And oh, Kate, think—if news should *never* come! If weeks, and months, and years should pass, and no light were to break on my darkness—if I should never hear from Launcelot again, never know what had become of him!"

"My darling, don't think of such a thing. Why torment yourself by picturing the worst. Perhaps, after all, this is merely some freak of Mr. Vere's——" Her voice stopped; the hypothesis was too absurd.

"Do you know, Kate, Miss Unwin has left home suddenly; and papa fancies that Launcelot and she have gone off together! Isn't it too ridiculous?"

"I should think it was the last thing he was likely to do," said Kate evasively.

"Even if he had done so I would forgive him, Kate. Oh, I think I could forgive him *anything*, if only I knew what had become of him!"

Kate's face grew dark and stern. Her heart bled for her friend; and she was beginning to think hard things of Launcelot Vere.

"But I know all about Miss Unwin—Lance told me."

Kate started.

"He met her at Richmond, at Mr. Pascoe's, you know. She is a daughter (or a niece—I forget which) of Mr. Pascoe's housekeeper. When Lance's friend died, Mrs. Unwin found another situation, and the girl came here to be schoolmistress. Lance was quite surprised to see her here; it was quite a coincidence, he said."

Kate found it difficult to make any reply. In her secret mind she had always suspected that her friend's lover had eloped with this Miss Unwin, and the fact that he had spoken of her to his betrothed bride seemed to make things worse, if he were guilty.

After a time she bade her friend good-night. As she came downstairs the Rector met her, and drew her into his study.

"I'm afraid, Miss Dale, there can be no further doubt," he said.

"Have you had news of Mr. Vere?" she asked quickly.

"No; but I have had a letter from Mrs. Unwin. She has heard nothing from her daughter, and is very anxious about her. She seems to have heard of Vere's disappearance, and—but you can see her letter for yourself."

Kate ran her eye over the letter; it seemed to indicate, she thought, that Mrs. Unwin believed that her daughter had eloped with Mr. Vere.

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"It seems to me," said the Rector, "that I ought to insist upon this engagement being definitely broken off. I am surprised that Winnie, poor girl, does not see the matter in the same light. One does not like to insist, you know. But Mr. Shenstone, who seems to be a man of considerable knowledge of the world, with plenty of sound common sense, agrees with me that there is no reasonable doubt about the case. And if that is so, it seems much better that the engagement should be considered at an end. Don't you think so?"

"Don't you think it might be well to wait a few days longer?" suggested Kate. "I don't think Winnie should be troubled at present."

"Then you and Mr. Shenstone don't agree on the subject?"

"I have never discussed it with him," said Kate, blushing a little. "All I say is—Winnie has not yet lost faith in her lover. Do not insist on her repudiating him, dear Mr. Denvers, as long as her trust in him survives. If I might make a suggestion I would say: Do not allude to the subject in any way, and send Winnie away somewhere for a change as soon as she can be persuaded to leave home."

"Perhaps you are right," grumbled the Rector. "But it is very annoying. I should like to be able to tell our friends that we are done with the fellow for good and all."

CHAPTER V.

A Practical Hint.

On Sunday afternoon Harold went over to Wythecombe, and called at the High Cottage, as Mrs. Dale's house was called, to report what he had done in London. He asked for Miss Dale, and was told that she was in the drawing-room.

When he was ushered into the drawing-room he found Mr. Shenstone there before him; and if he could have done so he would have turned on his heel and gone away. He had not yet succeeded in schooling himself so as to endure the sight of these two together with perfect equanimity, and he did not care to discuss the affairs of his own most intimate friend before one who was comparatively a stranger.

Shenstone, however, showed himself to be not wanting in tact. He became interested in a portfolio of engravings at one end of the little drawing-room, and left Kate to talk to her visitor.

"I have learned nothing," said Harold in a low tone, "except that Vere left without luggage. On the other hand, he seems to have had quite enough money with him, for he drew £75 from the bank that day, Tuesday; and I found none in his room—indeed, there was no drawer or desk locked up that I could see. One of his portmanteaux was missing; but possibly Vere parted with it some time ago. He had an engagement for Tuesday night, which he failed to keep. It is as great a mystery to me as ever."

As he had been speaking, Harold had been stripping a flat parcel he carried with him of its covering.

"Do you know that face?" he asked, holding a sketch before Miss Dale.

"It is the schoolmistress, Miss Unwin. Where did you find that? In Mr. Vere's studio?"

Harold nodded.

"I fancy that may be explained," said Kate; and she proceeded to tell him that Miss Unwin had at one time been an inmate of Mr. Pascoe's house. "It is quite likely," she added, "that Mr. Vere met her there, and got her to sit to him as a model."

"Then they may have become intimate. That looks rather as if—Miss Dale," he cried suddenly in a loud tone, "I can't and won't believe it."

"You shouldn't speak so loud if you are talking secrets," said Shenstone in a pleasant tone from his corner.

"I am talking no secrets," said Harold gloomily. "All the world may hear me say it. I don't believe that my friend, Launcelot Vere, has eloped with Miss Unwin. Weak he may be, but he is not a scoundrel. I could understand his being infatuated enough to run away with the girl. But that he should have done so on the very eve of his marriage, and without a word of warning to his bride—that Vere should commit an outrage of that description—no. It is not possible."

"Did you meet with any success in your inquiries?" asked Shenstone politely.

"None at all."

"I wish I could help you, for Miss Denvers' sake for—"

"I thought you were of opinion that the match should be definitely broken off," interrupted Kate.

"Speaking as a friend of Miss Denvers' and of her family, certainly I think so. Mr. Vere's conduct seems to

Kate ran her eye over the letter.

me inexcusable. Even Mr. Kenyon will agree with me in that. But it would be a satisfaction to him, and to us all, to know exactly what had become of Vere; and I shall be very glad to help in clearing up the mystery."

"Well, if you can make any suggestions, I shall be happy to act on them," said Kenyon bluntly.

"You have advertised for news of your friend, offering a reward for any information?"

"No. I don't see how it could do any good."

"It could do no harm, and it might elicit something. I should certainly advertise."

"I will. I ought to have done so sooner. Thank you for the hint. Does anything else occur to you?"

"Well, you know what I suggested before," said Shenstone with a smile—"find the woman."

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"Perhaps you are right," answered Kenyon, after a moment's pause. "I will find Mrs. Unwin's address, and see her at once."

"My dear fellow," said Shenstone, with an amused look on his face, "when a young lady runs away, one does not go to her mother's house to look for her."

Kenyon reddened a little; and Kate came to his relief by saying:

"I fancy Mrs. Unwin is in a situation as housekeeper, or something of that kind, and she does not know what has become of her daughter; she is very anxious about her. Mr. Denvers showed me last night a letter he had from her. She seems to think that—that the circumstances are suspicious."

Harold said nothing, but sat gloomily staring at the carpet.

"Did you make inquiries at Paddington?" asked Shenstone.

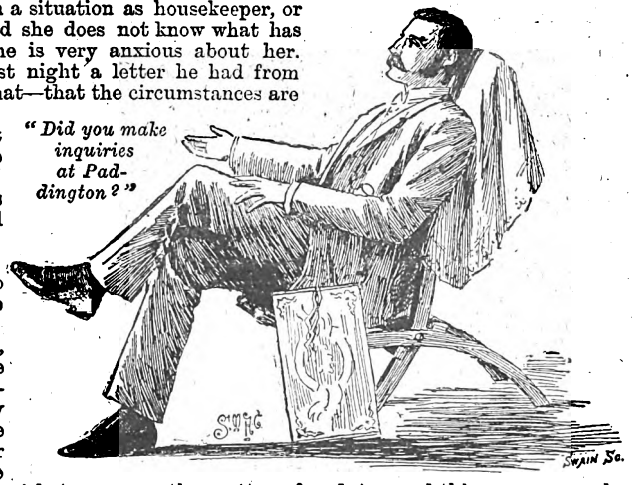
"No."

"It might be well to do so—if you wish to ascertain the truth."

There was a suspicion, only a suspicion of a pause in the middle of the sentence; and Kenyon threw a sharp glance at the speaker's face, to see whether he meant to insinuate that he, Kenyon, did not wish to pursue the matter of Vere's disappearance too closely. But Shenstone's face wore its usual composed look, and Harold looked down at the carpet once more.

"I will advertise for news of this Miss Unwin at once," he said.

"Don't you think—I merely throw out the suggestion—that that would be a little premature?" asked Shenstone. He spoke in a hesitating, deprecatory way, as if he feared to give offence by interfering too much. "You see," he added, as Harold looked at him inquiringly, "such an advertisement ought to come from *her*, Miss Unwin's, friends. If she can account for her absence in an innocent, natural way, she might be greatly offended, perhaps injured, by the advertisement. Then the two advertisements, one for Mr. Vere and one for her, appearing together, would be awkward."



"Did you make inquiries at Paddington?"

"True: I did not think of that," said Kenyon.

"I should make inquiries at Paddington, or find out the guards of the trains and question them; or, if necessary, print a few handbills, offering a small reward for information, and circulate them among the railway officials."

Kenyon thanked his rival, and, feeling that he had stayed long enough at the Cottage, he took his leave. He hoped that Katharine would say something about his coming again to report the result of his fresh inquiries; but she either forgot to do so, or purposely omitted to give him any invitation.

"What a clever fellow that is! He thinks of everything," said Harold to himself, as he went down the hill. "It would never have done for me to advertise for Miss Unwin. But I can find out what train she travelled by on Tuesday. I had better do that now."

He turned down a lane which led to the railway-station about a mile from the village. Having reached it, he found a porter on duty; and this man remembered Miss Unwin's leaving on Tuesday forenoon.

"Took a ticket for London, she did," said the man grinning; "and I fancy the guard, a man of the name of Martin, might tell 'ee some more about her. Leastways I heard a man say he believed Martin had been heard talking about her. They do say Martin was a bit sweet on her hisself," added the man with another grin.

"Where can I see this man Martin?" asked Kenyon impatiently.

"You'll have to go to London to see him, sir; for they've given him a small station on the Wycombe branch."

Harold handed the man a trifle and turned away, telling himself that at last he was about to put his finger on the key of the mystery.

(To be continued.)

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"JUNO" CYCLES

Are the Very Best.

JUNO Safeties. Roadsters, 28lb.; Racers, 22lb. JUNO Lady's Safety a Specialite.

Send at once for JUNO Catalogue, sent post free to any part of the world, interesting and valuable to all. METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS' CO., LTD., 75 and 76, Bishopsgate Without, London, E.C.

N.B.—Every JUNO Guaranteed. MENTION PAPER.

CAN YOU WRITE?

Of course you can! Why not then emboss your Notepaper, etc., with a pretty Monogram? using the

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Every Initial and Monogram of two letters kept in stock. Monogram of two letters, 1/1; Initials, 10d. each, post free. Apply—

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KNITS Stockings ribbed or plain, Gloves and Clothing in Wool, Silk, or Cotton. Instructions Free. Lists free per post. 25 Triumphant Awards, including 7 Gold Medals, for the "Harrison" and "Sun" Machines.

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Prices 12/6 and 14/6 delivered free. 84 letters and business signs. Type equal to that of a £20 machine. Illustrated particulars on receipt of addressed envelope.

ATKINSON & Co., 17 Elmwood St., Leeds.

HAIR DESTROYED

permanently and absolutely by an entirely new and harmless self-treatment, total destruction guaranteed. Particulars free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. Prof. F. T. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

ARMSTRONG'S

Lady's & Gentleman's, from £5 10s., carriage paid. Prompt delivery, lists free. SPORTING GUN DEPT., **Collingwood Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.**

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Permanently cured in a few days by a simple, inexpensive self-treatment. Particulars free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope to Dr. A. M. CURTIS, York Chambers, Adelphi, London, W.C.

ARE YOU FAT?

DR. GORDON'S Elegant Pills are the only Safe and Lasting Cure for Stoutness, Abdominal or General. State height, weight, and send 2/9, 4/6, or 11/- to Dr. Gordon, 24, Hart St., London, W.C.

READ! READ! READ!

Miss Roberts, "Brooklyn," Spotland Road, Rochdale, says: "I am 21in. round waist—before taking your Pills, 27in." Mrs. Cox, "Hazelhurst," Brondesbury Road, N.W.: "The last supply reduced me 14lb. in month without change of diet." P. Bendelow, 59, Dorset Street, Bolton: "Your Pills greatly reduced my weight." H. I. Cooper, 57 Somers Road, Southsea, says: "Your Pills reduced me 2stones." Mrs. J. Mastery, of Shirley, Derby: "I have lost nearly 3 stones in weight." Miss Nappey, Wood Lane, Headingley: "I have lost 18lb."

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY

BUNTER'S NERVINE

Prevents Decay. Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented. Neuralgic Headache and all Nerve Pains Removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.

A LOVELY FIGURE

with full natural perfect Bust, obtained by a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment, approved and recommended by the medical profession. Success guaranteed. For particulars free, send stamped envelope in confidence to Madame "B. J." Oriental Toilet Co., 87, Strand, London.

ORGAN 4s. Monthly.

WALNUT CASE. KNEE SWELL. SPLENDID TONE.

10 Years' Warranty. 72 Page List Post Free.

ALPHONSE CARY, NEWBURY, BERKS.

TO TOBACCONISTS COMMENCING.

£20

See Illus. Guide and Catalogue (259 pages), 3d. "How to Open a Cigar Stores, from £20 to £2,000." TOBACCONISTS' OUTFITTING CO., 189, Euston Road, London. (Over 50 years' reputation.) Manager, H. MYERS.

Every Young Man can positively and speedily cultivate a **HEAVY, HANDSOME MOUSTACHE,**

By a few applications of **Knowles' "Esauline,"** the newly-discovered Hair-Forcing Specific. Success guaranteed. "ESAULINE" thickens the growth of the Moustache, is an infallible cure for falling off of the Hair, weak or thin Eyebrows, Premature Baldness, etc., and as a general Hair Producer and Restorer is absolutely unrivalled. Will not stain or injure the most delicate Skin. Highly recommended for Children's Hair. From all Chemists and Hair Dressers.

Post Free, Prices, 1s. 6d., 3s., or 5s.

T. KNOWLES & CO.,

330, HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON.

DOUGLAS, HUNGERFORD, AND WILLIAMS.

PROFITS PAID DURING 1895.

Jan. 2, £8 per cent., Feb. 1, £6, Mar. 1, £5, April 1, £8, May 1, £7, June 2, £10, July 1, £9, Aug. 1, £9, Sept. 2, £8, Oct. 1, £8, Nov. 1, £7, Dec. 2, £7.

Total for 12 months £92 per cent., an average of nearly £8 PER CENT. PER MONTH.

PROFITS PAID DURING 1896.

Jan. 2, £6 per cent., Feb. 1, £7, Mar. 2, £6, April 1, £6, May 1, £6.

OUR NEW ILLUSTRATED MANUAL mailed free upon request, showing how these profits may be made WITHOUT SPECULATION. Cheques for profits mailed promptly 1st of each month, and for withdrawals of capital on 2nd and 16th of each month. Trial investments of £5 and upwards may be made.

We have not a dissatisfied Client.

DOUGLAS, HUNGERFORD, & WILLIAMS, 5, Copthall Avenue, London, E.C., and 11, Place de la Bourse, Paris.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

HOW TO PATENT AN INVENTION.

Book giving full particulars as to Cost, Forms, &c. Post Free. **CASSELL & CO. (Patent Agents), 22, Glasshouse Street, Piccadilly Circus, London.** Inventors assisted. Consultation and Advice Free.

HAIR DESTROYED.

A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs. "T. D.," 87, Strand, London.

GIVEN AWAY £5,000!

GRAHAM & CO.'S

MONSTER GIFTS.

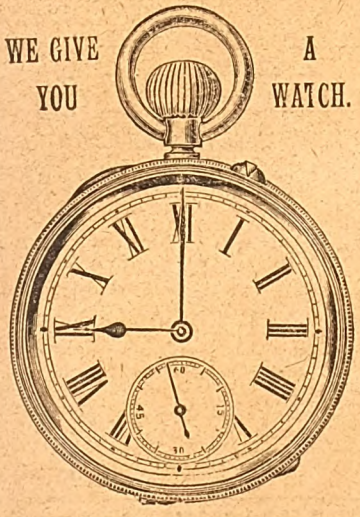
IMPORTANT NOTICE.—Messrs. GRAHAM & CO. intend to present their Customers with a Monster Parcel as a means of advertising their celebrated

EGYPTIAN GOLD JEWELLERY.

For the small sum of **6s. 6d.** we will send as follows:—

NOT A TOY

WE GIVE YOU A WATCH.



	Our Price.	
One Gent's Egyptian Gold Albert, or one Lady's Egyptian Gold Albert	2s. 6d.	FOR 6s. 6d.
One Seal or Locket for Chain	1s. 6d.	
One Gent's Carbon Diamond Ring, or one Lady's 5-stone Diamond Ring	3s. 6d.	
One Gent's Carbon Diamond Scarfpin, or one Lady's Fashionable Brooch	2s. 6d.	
One Pair of Cuff Links, or one Carbon Diamond Bracelet ...	2s. 6d.	
Total	12s. 6d.	

In addition to the above Every Purchaser will be Presented Free of Charge with one of our handsome

KEYLESS WATCHES.

USUALLY SOLD AT HALF-A-GUINEA.

Read what is said by those who have purchased.

WANTS A SECOND PARCEL.

Lowick-by-Neale, Northumberland, August 17.

GENTLEMEN,—Received to-day your second parcel of jewellery, with which we are immensely pleased. We really wonder how you can do it. The watch itself is worth more than the money charged for the whole. Many thanks for punctuality.—Very truly yours, WILLIAM McISAAC.

GOES BETTER THAN HIS £15 WATCH.

11, North Street, St. Peters, Tunbridge Wells.

GENTLEMEN,—Some few weeks ago I sent to your firm for the jewellery and advertised watch, of which I am surprised; the *watch* is a beautiful timist. I must admit, in fact, it goes better than my £15 gold watch; and for the jewellery it is astonishing value. I think you must lose money over such gifts, as I term it. The watch alone is worth double the 7s. I enclosed. I have shown it to several of my friends, and they were astonished. You can add this to your testimonials if it will be of any service.—I am, Gentlemen, yours faithfully, LEWIS C. RHODES.

GUARANTEED TO KEEP CORRECT TIME.

Any Watch not received in going order will be exchanged.

Every Watch is Carefully Examined, Timed, and Guaranteed a Correct Timekeeper. Call and see them.

We do this to save the enormous cost of advertising, preferring to give our customers the benefit. As we lose money on each parcel we cannot supply more than two parcels to one person. If you cannot call get a P.O. at once, and send for this wonderful parcel. Orders will be executed in Rotation.

MONEY RETURNED IF NOT AS REPRESENTED.

NOTE.—The entire parcel will be sent for 6s. 6d. (post free, registered, 7s.). Each customer will receive gratis one of our HANDSOMELY ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUES. Be sure and call or send to-day for the

6s. 6d. Monster Presentation Parcel including the Handsome Keyless Watch.

S. S. GRAHAM & CO., 277, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.

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A POWERFUL NEW SERIAL HAS JUST COMMENCED.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 388. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 6TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

BE SURE TO KEEP IT WELL.

WONDERFUL BARGAINS!

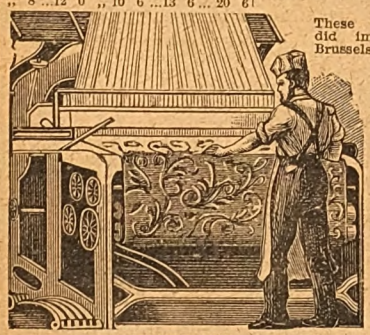
IMMENSE REDUCTION IN PRICES OF OUR WORLD-RENOWNED

BRUSSELETTE CARPETS.

ADMITTEDLY THE CHEAPEST IN THE WORLD. Seamless, Woven, and Reversible, Rich Turkey Patterns and Colourings, Superior Quality, with Handsome Border to match, a Marvel of Excellence and Beauty.

SIZES AND PRICES.

	ft.	in.	ft.	in.	Sale Price. s.	d.	Former Price. s.	d.
No. 1	3	0	by 6	0	5	6	9	0
,, 2	3	0	,, 7	6	7	0	11	6
,, 3	3	0	,, 9	0	8	6	13	6
,, 4	3	6	,, 7	6	8	9	13	9
,, 5	3	6	,, 9	0	10	0	15	6
,, 6	4	0	,, 9	0	11	6	18	0
,, 7	3	6	,, 10	6	12	0	18	6
,, 8	4	0	,, 10	6	13	6	20	6
No. 9	4	0	by 9	0	14	3	22	6
,, 10	4	6	,, 10	6	15	3	24	0
,, 11	4	0	,, 12	0	15	3	24	0
,, 12	4	3	,, 12	0	17	0	27	0
,, 13	4	6	,, 12	0	19	0	32	0
,, 14	4	6	,, 12	0	22	9	36	0
,, 15	4	6	,, 12	0	26	0	42	0



These Carpets are splendid imitations of Real Brussels Carpets, the designs having been carefully copied from the originals, both as regards colourings and patterns, so that when in use it is almost impossible, except by close scrutiny, to detect the difference. They have gained a world-wide reputation for magnificence, cheapness, and utility, having no equal. All designs are registered and deservedly considered works of art.

THIS ADVERTISEMENT.

GIVEN AWAY.

As an advertisement for the introduction of these goods to all readers of *Short Stories*, we have decided to give away to every purchaser of the above goods, enclosing cutting from this advertisement, a very handsomely woven Hearthrug, 6ft. long and 3ft. wide, to match carpets in colours, etc.

Thousands of Repeat Orders and Unsolicited Testimonials have been received from our Customers.

Hurst Wood, near Maidstone.
Mrs. Thatcher writes: "Sir, please to send me two Carpets, etc. I had two from you three years ago, and they have given great satisfaction."

Police Station, Larkhill, Lanarkshire, N.B.
Mr. L. Annand writes: "Would you please forward me another Brusselette Square, same as one received on Friday last. I must say it far exceeds my expectations. I am simply delighted with it."

All goods despatched same day as order received. SATISFACTION GUARANTEED OR MONEY RETURNED. Cheques and Postal Orders to be made payable to J. HARGREAVES, *Secretary*, and crossed "Union Bank." Established upwards of Twenty-five Years. Address:

THE BRITISH CARPET WEAVING CO.,
31, OLD STREET, LONDON, E.C.

PAY YOU WELL.

MASON'S
EXTRACT OF HERBS
For the Immediate Production of
BOTANIC BEER.

A Nine-gallon Cask of Alcoholic Beer from a Brewery will cost you 10/6, but Eight Gallons of Beer made from

Mason's
EXTRACT of HERBS

Can be obtained for 6d., plus a pound or two of Sugar and a little Yeast.

THE
FINEST BEVERAGE
IN THE WORLD.

Inventors and Manufacturers:
Newball & Mason,
HYSON GREEN WORKS,
Nottingham.

If unable to obtain it in your neighbourhood, send 9 stamps for sample bottle; or samples of both Wine Essence and Extract of Herbs, post free for 15 stamps.

"JUNO" CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

JUNO Safeties. Roadsters, 28lb.; Racers, 22lb. JUNO Ladies' Safety a Specialite.

Send at once for JUNO Catalogue, sent post free to any part of the world, interesting and valuable to all. METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS' CO., LTD., 75 and 76, Bishopsgate Without, London, E.C.

N.B.—Every JUNO Guarantee MENTION PAPER. *ed.*

THE JOHN NOBLE HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES

Direct from the Largest Firm of Costume Manufacturers in the world, have secured beyond a doubt the **ADMIRATION OF THE WORLD.** Being Absolutely Without an Equal Anywhere for Stylish Appearance, Durability, and Actual Money Value. **10/6**

TWO GOLD MEDALS AWARDED.

These Costumes have received the highest praise from the leading journals of the day, and are justly regarded by all purchasers as **Even Better than Advertised.**

Each Costume scientifically cut, tailor-made, and beautifully finished in an exceedingly smart mode, as illustration. The design consists of full wide Godet skirt with belt, also very neat bodice with full front and broad box-pleat down centre, trimmed bold silk cord and three large buttons. Collar and cuffs outlined silk cord; saddle and sleeves lined.

Price complete only **10/6.** Safely packed and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra.

Sizes in stock fit figures measuring 34, 36, or 38 in. round bust under arms, skirts being 38, 40, and 42 in. long in front; larger or special sizes made to measure, 1/6 extra.

THE JOHN NOBLE

COSTUMES FOR YOUNG MISSES

are made in the John Noble Cheviot Serge, and trimmed military braid as illustration. A large box-pleat down the centre of the lined bodice, and a fancy pocket at each side of the skirt, complete a charming design at these prices: FROM **8/6**

Lengths	35	38	42	46	50 inches.
Prices	8/6	9/6	10/9	12/-	13/6 each.

Each costume safely packed and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra.

KNOCKABOUT FROCKS FOR GIRLS

are also supplied in the **John Noble Cheviot Serge,** with saddle top, long full sleeves, and pocket, at following prices: FROM **1/6**

Lengths	21	24	27	30	33	36	39	42	45 in.
Prices	1/6	2/-	2/6	3/-	3/6	4/-	4/6	5/-	5/6 ea.

Postage 1½d. extra. Lengths stated above are from top of neckband to bottom of skirt in front.

COLOURS: Any of the above garments can be supplied in **Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Bronze Green, Electric Blue, Ruby, Dark Cinnamon, Fawn, or Grey.**

The JOHN NOBLE CHEVIOT SERGE in which the above garments are made is a fabric of world-wide fame and durability, measuring 52in. wide. The full Dress Length of Six Yards can be supplied for 7/6, or any length at 1/3 the yard. Colours as above. **7/6**

PATTERNS, also **FASHION SHEETS** of numerous other designs in Ladies' and Children's Costumes, etc., sent Post Free to any reader of *"Short Stories"* on application to

JOHN NOBLE LTD., Brook St. Mills, MANCHESTER.

MRS. LAWRENCE

A Farmer's Wife, writes from Mid-Rasen, Lincolnshire: "For a long time I suffered severely from

INDIGESTION

And WIND IN THE STOMACH, and had to call in the doctor. Having prescribed for me some time he said, 'I can do nothing more for you.' My husband urged me to try your WIND PILLS; he brought me a box and I took them. In a few days I was quite well and able to get up, and now enjoy excellent health. Publish my name and address."

Page Woodcock's Wind Pills

Being purely Vegetable, Tasteless, Mild, and Tonic, may be taken with perfect safety by the most delicate of either sex.

ALL SUFFERERS from INDIGESTION, LIVER COMPLAINTS, WIND ON THE STOMACH, BILIOUSNESS, SICK HEADACHE, PALPITATION OF THE HEART, etc.,

should avail themselves of this most excellent medicine.

Of all Chemists, at **1s. 1½d.** and **2s. 9d.** Post Free for Price from PAGE WOODCOCK, LINCOLN.

Every Young Man can positively and speedily cultivate a **HEAVY, HANDSOME MOUSTACHE,**

By a few applications of **Knowles' "Esauline,"** the newly-discovered Hair-Forcing Specific. Success guaranteed. "ESAULINE" thickens the growth of the Moustache, is an infallible cure for falling off of the Hair, weak or thin Eyebrows, Premature Baldness, etc., and as a general Hair Producer and Restorer is absolutely unrivalled. Will not stain or injure the most delicate Skin. Highly recommended for Children's Hair. From all Chemists and Hair Dressers.

Post Free, Prices, 1s. 6d., 3s., or 5s.

T. KNOWLES & CO.,

330, HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON.

ONE BOX

OF

Dr. Mackenzie's Improved Harmless Arsenic Complexion Wafers

will produce the most lovely complexion that the imagination could desire; clear, fresh, free from blotch, blemish, coarseness, redness, freckles, or pimples. Post free for 4/6.—**S. HARVEY,** 5, Denman St., London Bridge, S.E. Half-boxes 2/9. Use **Dr. MACKENZIE'S ARSENICAL TOILET SOAP.** 1s. per Tablet; No. 2, unscented, 6d. per Tablet. **Made from Purest Ingredients and Absolutely Harmless.**

Beware of the many imitations.

HAVE DR. MACKENZIE'S OR NONE.

CAN YOU WRITE?

Of course you can! Why not then emboss your Notepaper, etc., with a pretty Monogram? using the

Patent Pocket Monopresse

Every Initial and Monogram of two letters kept in stock. Monogram of two letters, 1/1; Initials, 10d. each, post free. Apply—

CHAS. ROMPLER, 7, New Basinghall St., London, E.C. *Agents wanted.*

HIGH-CLASS TAILORING

Every Garment cut to measure.

DIRECT from the Manufacturer, Saving all Middle Profits.

LADIES' TAILOR-MADE COSTUMES

In all the present Shades, From **10/6** to **70/-.** Value Unequalled. Fit Guaranteed.

MEN'S SUITS 18/6

Better Qualities, 22/6, 25/6, 31/6, 37/6, 45/-, 52/6, 63/-.

Cycling Suits from 12/6.

BOYS' SUITS.

Pieces for mending sent with all Suits.

See our New Patterns before ordering. *It will pay you to do so.*

Hundreds to choose from.

Fashion plates and measure forms free on application. All Goods Carriage Paid.

Factory Clothing Co.

Manufacturing and Ladies' Tailors,

117K, ALBION ST., LEEDS.

S.S. S.S.

PEARSON'S

£100

COUPON.

No. 23

June 6, 1896.

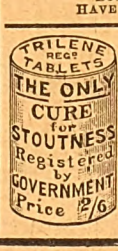
S.S. S.S.

HAIR DESTROYED.

A doctor's widow knows of a simple, inexpensive remedy that permanently destroys the roots, and will forward particulars free to all those afflicted sending stamped envelope. Address Mrs. B. D. WOOD, 4, DUKE STREET, VILLIERS STREET, LONDON, W.

BLUSHING

Permanently cured. A Pamphlet giving sound practical advice and particulars of a successful treatment for a rapid, simple, and inexpensive home cure, forwarded free to all upon receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—Prof. B. L. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.



ALL FAT PEOPLE

Readily **Reduce Weight** and **Cure Corpulency Permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to PRESERVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of diet. **Reduction begins immediately.**

An English Countess writes: *"Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."* Send **2/6** to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 388.] For the Week ending June 6th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

GRASPED by Death.

I DOUBT if a more terrible thing ever happened to any man than that which happened to me in the autumn of 1889. The memory of it all is with me now as though it were but yesterday; and sometimes I wake shrieking in my dreams, and lie awake all night, oppressed with a great agony of fear.

I was a clerk in Burton's bank at Exeter. For some days I had been queer and out of sorts. More than once I had been conscious of what seemed to me to be a sudden numbness of the limbs. For instance, on two separate occasions I had been incapable of rising from my office stool.

My wife and fellow clerks noticed that I did not seem to be in my usual health, and my wife in particular had been urgent in intreating me to take my annual holiday without delay. But I had some complicated accounts to balance, which I was unable to leave undone; and that more especially since they had given me an infinitude of trouble, the sought-for balance being exactly the thing I could not get.

It was the evening of September 14th. It was a Friday. I had decided at the last moment to remain at the bank after the rest had gone, for I had arranged that if only I could get the accounts all right, I would start for Penzance the following morning with my wife.

It had been a hot day, that Friday—a terrible day—and all day long I had been conscious not only of a curious unwillingness, but of an absolute incapacity, to move. In some extraordinary way my limbs seemed, in a measure, to have passed from my control.

I suppose it was past six o'clock. I was all alone in the bank; the rest of the establishment had left a good hour ago. I was leaning forward on my desk, racking my brains to think where the error could be, when—shall I ever forget it?—in an instant—a flash of lightning—I became conscious of a singular sensation which was stealing over me. It was just as though some malevolent spirit had woven a spell, and deprived me of the power of motion. I was spell-bound, rooted to my seat, as helpless as though I had been struck by the hand of death.

The strangest part of it was, that while in that sudden awful visitation I had lost the use of my limbs, I had preserved my faculties intact. I could see—straight in front, that is—for not only could I not even close my eyes, but I could not even change the direction of my glance. I could only look straight in front of me with what I felt instinctively must be a fixed, horrible, glassy stare. But what there was in front of me, that I could plainly see. And I could hear; indeed my hearing seemed to be unnaturally keen. For instance, Burton's Bank is in the Cathedral Yard. Not only could I hear every footstep which passed even on the other side of the Cathedral—no slight distance for the sound of a foot to travel—but I could hear the traffic that went up and down Fore Street Hill and over the bridge, right away to St. Thomas's on the other side. And worse, for in the horror of all that followed it was of a surety the worst of all—I could think. My brain, like my hearing, seemed to become phenomenally clear. Instantaneously I knew what had come upon me. It was catalepsy. I was in a cataleptic fit.

I felt no pain—physical pain, at least. In that sense

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I was like a man whose physical side is dead, but whose mind still lives.

And as I sat there hour after hour, dead, my agony of mind rose to such a climax that I cannot but think that it transcended whatever agony of body the most morbid imagination has at any time described.

It grew dark—so dark that my eyes became useless for any purpose of sight, and yet they would not shut. It became silent, too, the intense silence of the night.

But all at once, when the night was stillest, a sound struck on my ears—a peculiar sound, as of someone who walked with muffled steps. And then—could it be? Yes! A window was being opened.

I cannot doubt that the only thing which had kept me from promptly falling on to the floor when the fit had first taken me, was the fact that I was leaning so forward that the greater part of my weight was on the desk. So, leaning forward on the desk, I stayed.

Just in front of me was a glass partition, on the other side of which was the inner office, in which the safe was kept. It was the window of the inner office which was being opened now. By what I cannot but suppose was a providential accident, since I could not alter the direction of my glance, the safe was right in my line of sight. And so, although I could not immediately see who it was that entered, directly the intruder came between myself and the safe I could see him plainly.

It was Philip Morris, our head cashier.

At first all was dark. Then a light was struck, and someone, bearing a shaded lantern in his hand, appeared in my line of sight.

It was Philip Morris, our head cashier, and practically the manager of the bank!

I shall never forget my unutterable amazement when I perceived that it was he. What could bring him there at such an hour, in such a way? He wore a light dust-coat, which was unbuttoned down the front, so that I could see his dress-clothes beneath, and the diamonds gleaming in his shirt. He carried a small leather bag in his hand.

He took a bunch of keys from his pocket; with these he unlocked the safe. From it he took a quantity of notes—I could hear them rustle—and several bags of gold, which jingled as he dropped them in his bag. Then he turned right round, so that I saw him full in the face.

"If Wheeler could only see me now"—I should mention that my name is Wheeler. The allusion was to me—"I think he would soon unriddle the mystery of his accounts. Well, the game is up, I suppose. I had my fling, even if the result is penal servitude for life. I flatter myself that few men would have had the dexterity to carry it on for so long a time."

He came a few steps forward, the lantern in his hand, and suddenly stopped short.

His eyes were fixed on the glass partition. On his face there was an expression of the most awful, ghastly fear. His lips seemed parched. He gasped for breath.

For a moment I thought he would be seized with a convulsion; but he had sufficient control over himself to ward off that.

He spoke at last, and his voice was like the unearthly utterance of a strangled man.

"Wheeler! Wheeler! Is it you? For God's sake don't look like that! Your eyes are horrible!"

He covered his own eyes with his hand; I could see him shudder. Then he looked again; his mood was changed. With quick, firm steps, he advanced to the partition door, and entered the office in which I was.

"I suppose you think you have caught me?" he cried. "I congratulate you on your cleverness. But perhaps you have caught more than you think."

Suddenly he seemed struck by my immobility. He came a step nearer.

"Why do you sit there like a wooden block, you hypocritical old fool? Do you hear? Can't you speak? You think you have trapped me very neatly, eh?"

He paused. He came a step nearer.

"Can't you speak, you fool? Wheeler! Wheeler!"

He laid his hand upon my shoulder. He shone the lantern in my face.

Suddenly he gave the most dreadful shriek that ever I had heard.

"My God!" he cried. "He's dead!"

In his sudden fear the lantern fell from his hand with a crash. He gave me a push which sent me flying head foremost to the floor. And where I fell, like a dead man I lay.

* * * * *

I lay on my own bed in my own bedroom. Oh, what had I done to deserve the agony which I endured then?

There was my wife on her knees beside the bed, there was a candle which flickered on the chest of drawers, although daylight had already streamed into the room, and there was I, wrapped in the garments which enfold the dead.

How my wife wept! How she mourned in the sudden anguish of her woe! Now she called upon God for mercy and for strength, and now she got upon the bed

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and pillowed her head upon my breast, or bedewed my face with her kisses and tears.

"Richard!" she cried, "Richard! After all these years! My own! My dear!"

And then she wept as though her heart would break. Who shall conceive my agony as I lay there?

A little later there was this scene.

Five men came into the room. There was Dr. Leverson, my own medical attendant; Wilfrid Burton, the banker, whom, man and boy, I had served for thirty years; Mr. Fellows, the lawyer to the bank; Philip Morris, that accursed thief; and Philipson, the chief of police.

It was Mr. Burton who spoke first. His voice was dry and cold—very different from the kindly, pleasant voice I knew so well.

"Before we go any further, I suppose, Dr. Leverson, there is no doubt that this wretched man is dead?"

Dr. Leverson smiled a superior smile.

"Richard Wheeler is certainly dead. I have the certificate of death in my pocket. The funeral is already arranged. He died from valvular disease of the heart, a disease of whose presence I had long been aware." My brain reeled as I listened to the glib announcement. "Doubtless his death was accelerated at the last by a sudden shock."

"God," said Mr. Burton, with a solemnity, the unconscious irony of which was hideous, "saw fit to strike down the criminal at the moment of his crime."

I wondered what Philip Morris looked like as he heard the words. He was out of my line of sight.

"And now," continued Mr. Burton, "proceed to the business which has brought us here. I need not point out to you, Doctor Leverson, that all that passes here is in the strictest confidence." I presume that the Doctor bowed his head. "The bank has been the victim of"—the speaker's voice trembled, and I felt that my wife covered her face with her hands—"of the most terrible dishonesty. To what extent the affair has gone I have not yet been able to ascertain, but I fear we have been robbed to the extent of at least a hundred thousand pounds."

A hundred thousand pounds! No wonder I could not get the accounts to balance! That villain had robbed us of one hundred thousand pounds at least, and I lay speechless there.

"Mr. Morris will repeat the statement which he has already made to me. You, Mr. Fellows, will kindly take it down, and we will have it attested in the presence of Captain Philipson. Mrs. Wheeler you need not stop; it will only be painful for your feelings. Indeed, I think you had better go away."

"Sir," said my dear wife—oh, how her dear voice rang through my brain—"whatever Mr. Morris may have to say, I never shall believe that of my dear husband, who was a God-fearing man for nearly thirty years."

"Ah, Mrs. Wheeler, how appearances may deceive. I had to the full as much confidence in him as you. Before you think that I misjudge him, hear what Mr. Morris has to say."

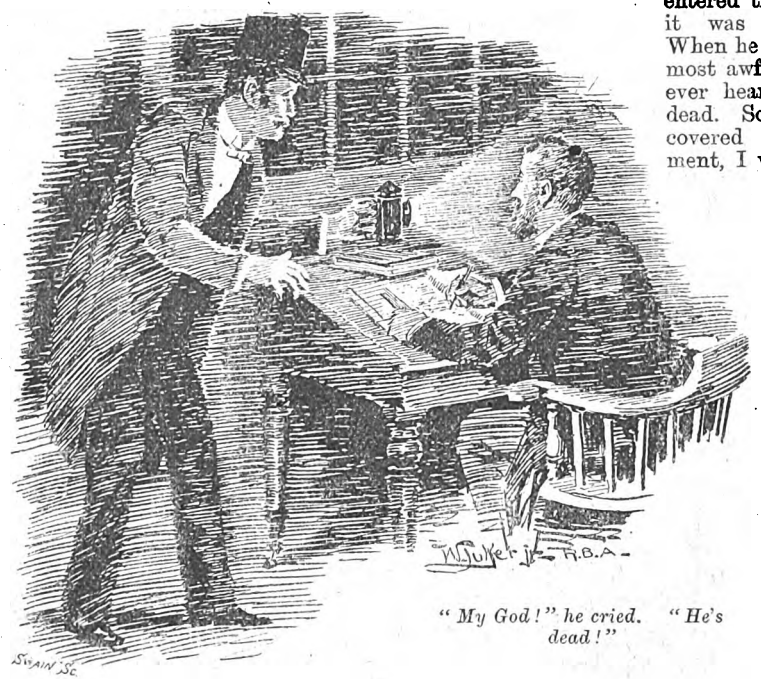
Philip Morris began his tale. It flashed upon me in an instant that he had availed himself of my supposed decease to fasten his guilt upon my head. But I had never imagined that anyone, in his circumstances, could have carried the matter through with so easy an air. There was even an affectation of pathos in his tone as he filled in the details of his horrid lie.

"I had been spending the evening at Mr. Fisher's"—Mr. Fisher was one of the minor canons, a bachelor, who was reputed to have a taste for whist, and for hours which were perhaps a little uncanonical—"I was returning home, when, on passing the bank, I noticed that there seemed to be a light in the office in which the safe is kept. The window, as you know, is but a few feet from the ground; I have often pointed out how easy it would be for a thief to get in that way."

"I know you have!" said Mr. Burton.

The hypocrite went on:

"To my surprise, I found it was unlatched. I opened it. Whoever was within was too much absorbed in his occupation to notice what I did. I looked through the open window, and saw that someone was in the inner office, but who it was I could not at first perceive. I climbed through the window, and went in. Directly I entered the man looked up; it was Richard Wheeler. When he saw me he gave the most awful scream I think I ever heard, and fell down—dead. So soon as I had recovered from my bewilderment, I went to the window and called for help. A constable, who heard me, came to my assistance. Together we examined the room. That is all I have to say. I only wish that I had not to say so much."



"My God!" he cried. "He's dead!"

"But there is more that must be said," Mr. Burton took up the strain. "In the grate were found the half-consumed fragments of the accounts, which if they had been suffered to continue in existence would inevitably have betrayed the dead man's crime. The safe was found open—it is still a mystery how he contrived to open it—ransacked of all the chief valuables it contained. On his desk was found a bag containing five hundred pounds in gold, and in his pockets notes for a

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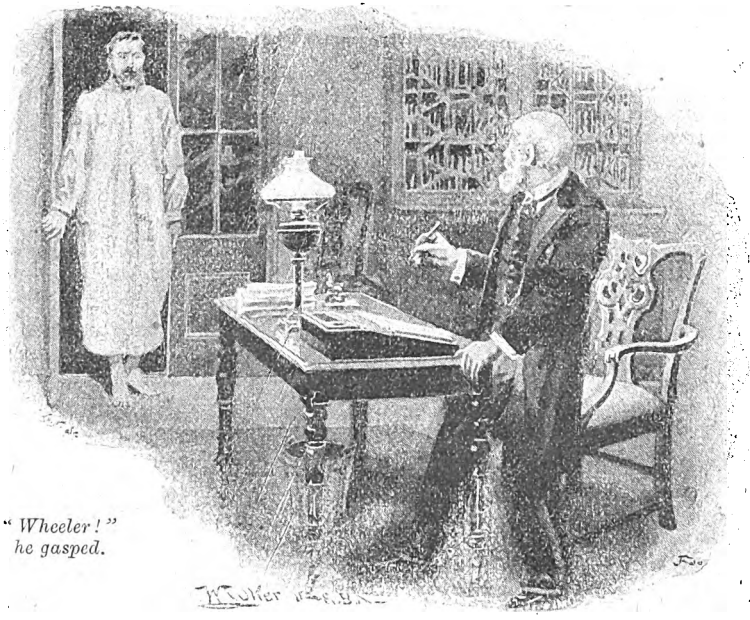
thousand pounds. But notes and gold to the value of ten thousand pounds, and securities to a very large amount are gone. We have still to find out where. I am sorry to tell you, Mrs. Wheeler, that to search this



"Wheeler!" he gasped.

house is one of the purposes which have brought us here."

"Sir," said my wife, "you need make no apology. You are welcome to search the house from basement to attic. You will find nothing that was not righteously my dear husband's own."

* * * * *

For five days I lay there—dead. Words cannot describe the agony I endured. Conceive it, if you can. Picture yourself in my position; conceive what you would suffer then. Far better had I indeed been dead.

On the second day they came and measured me for my coffin. Think of it—a living man! On the fourth day they brought it home, and I was placed within. There were two of them that brought it, and as they placed me in that narrow box they cracked their little jest.

"A tight fit, isn't he?" said one.

"Ah," replied his fellow, "they'd have given him as tight a fit if he had lived; four strong walls for life."

"Who'd ever have thought that old Dick Wheeler would have come to the gallows?"

"Well," again replied his fellow—how I loathed that man!—"I would for one. I never knew a psalm-singer yet that wasn't a robber and a thief."

When that choice pair had gone, my wife came in and looked at me as I lay in my last bed. She had a wreath in her hand, which she placed upon my breast, and a white rose, which betokened innocence, which she placed within the wreath. She stooped and kissed me on the brow; and, as she did so, she burst into a flood of tears.

"Oh, God!" she cried; "show that my dear husband was not a thief!"

The next day, the fifth, they came and screwed me down. Imagine that! I learned from what they said that they feared that if in that hot weather I was left for a longer time exposed, decomposition would set in. When they had already placed the lid upon my coffin, my wife came running in. I learned that they had come in her absence to shut me for ever from her sight. They imagined that if she were there she might object to what they did. Her appearance disconcerted them. She made them immediately remove the lid, and bade them withdraw from the room, so that she might have final solitary communion with her dead.

She knelt down by the side of my coffin and prayed. She expressed the most profound belief in the innocence of the man who had been her husband for nearly thirty years; and she besought the Most High that He would expound that innocence and make it clear to man. Then she stood up and kissed me on the lips—kissed me a last good-bye!

Then she left me, to the full as broken-hearted as she herself, and the undertaker's men returned and screwed me down.

How long I remained in that box, screwed down, I never knew. It seemed to me a hundred years. A dreadful thought came to me, not once, but again and again, with recurring force.

Suppose that I, indeed, was dead? Who knows the mysteries of death? Is it not conceivable that when the body dies, the mind, which has such a mysterious affinity with the soul, may live? If I were dead, and the shame should live! Was it possible that through the long cycle of the years, the æons which were still to come, my mind should live, and I be dead?

It is not strange that my pen should tremble as I recall the thoughts which racked then—racked me with such intensity that, even in my state of death, I feared I should go mad. And then? What then? Mad through the æons in the womb of time! Even dead, I thought my brain would burst.

I tried to scream. I struggled as with the issues of life and death for the power to give expression to the great agony of my fear and pain.

And then? What happened then? To this hour I cannot precisely say. I know that while, mentally, I struggled with inconceivable eagerness to cry out, I suddenly awoke. I know no other words to use. I knew I was alive—alive, and imprisoned in that box! And I do believe that for the first few moments of my resurrection—what was it else?—I actually was mad. I had a madman's strength, at any rate. I struggled like a madman, too—struggled to be free—and with such strength that I burst the box, forced the coffin's sides, and was a prisoner no more.

I stood upon my feet.

As I did so I discovered that my display of strength must have been a sort of frenzy, for, indeed, I was so weak that at first I could not stand. I sank back upon my bed. But only for a moment. There was that within me which gave me strength. I was filled with an overmastering desire to proclaim my innocence, and bring home to the criminal his crime. Wholly regardless of the clothes I wore, forgetful of them even, I went downstairs into the street, and ran to Mr. Burton's as certainly I never ran before.

I must have cut a pretty figure as I ran, but Mr.

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Burton's great house was within a couple of hundred yards of my more modest residence; the hour was late, and I never met a creature on the way.

I was well acquainted both with the banker's habits and his house. I knew that often, when the rest of the household was fast asleep, Mr. Burton would sit for hours writing in the study which opened on to the lawn at the back. To this room I hastened.

It was as I supposed. There was a bright light within. I turned the handle of the French window; it yielded to my touch. Without pausing for an instant to reflect on what the consequence of my act might be, I burst into the room.

As I entered, Mr. Burton was sitting writing at a table. When he saw me he rose from his seat. He clutched the edge of the table. He gazed at me, speechless, unable to believe that what he saw was real.

"Wheeler!" he gasped at last; "Richard Wheeler!"

"Yes, sir, 'tis I! Not dead, but living. This is no ghost you gaze upon, but a creature of flesh and blood, to whom God has given strength to declare his innocence, and expose another's crime."

I poured out my tale. He was too bewildered at first to grasp the meaning of my words. It was all so unexpected and so strange, that he was unable to realise that he was not the victim of some dreadful dream. But it became plain to him at last.

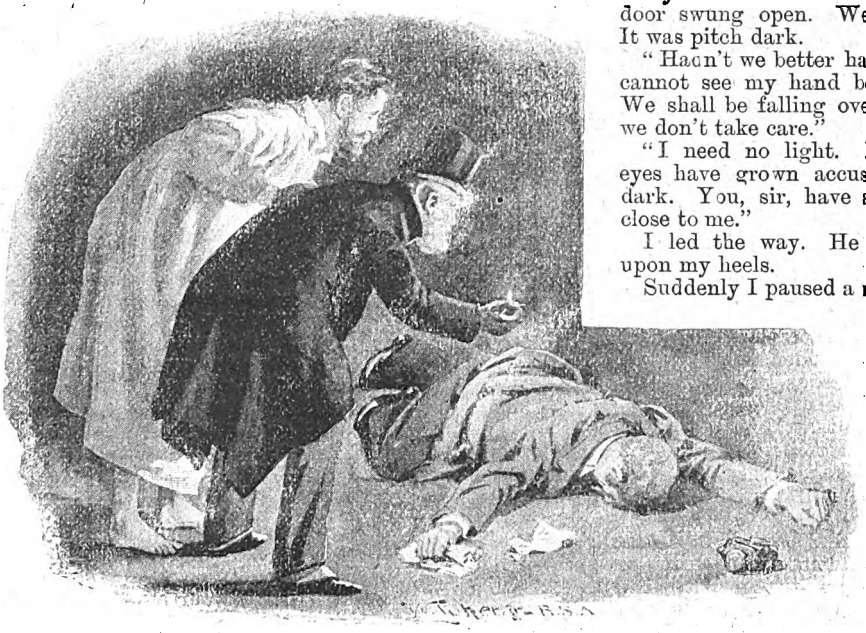
"How awful!" he exclaimed. "You make my blood run cold."

"But it is the truth; and things are revealed to me which to you are hidden."

I rose up, still in my grave clothes, trembling like a leaf. "At this instant the thief is at his work again, and tampers with the safe. Mr. Burton, I intreat you to come with me to the bank; his villainy shall be proved to-night."

"Come with you—to the bank—at this hour?"

But I had my way. The banker lent me some of his own clothes, and a great coat was thrown over my shoulders. The coachman was roused; a carriage was ordered out. Within a few minutes we were seated in it, and were being driven swiftly towards the bank, through the silent streets, to catch the criminal in the very moment of his crime.



We found him . . . lying in a fit upon the floor.

The carriage was drawn up some little distance from the bank. We got out. Mr. Burton had the key of the private door. We approached swiftly yet silently as well. Our chief object was not to give the alarm.

On the very threshold Mr. Burton paused.

"I am afraid that this is a wild-goose chase that you have brought me on. Some folks would even call it by a stronger name."

"Can you not hear him? Hark? He rustles a bundle of notes! They are those notes which were missing, and which you searched my house to find."

"Hear him, Wheeler? Are you mad? When he is in the private office—if he is anywhere at all—we are out in the street."

"I can hear him, if you can't. Give me the key or open the door. Every moment which we waste increases his chance of escape."

Hesitatingly—I believe he doubted my sanity even then—Mr. Burton put the key into the lock. Noiselessly it turned. Without a sound, the door swung open. We stood inside. It was pitch dark.

"Hadn't we better have a light? I cannot see my hand before my face. We shall be falling over something if we don't take care."

"I need no light. Remember my eyes have grown accustomed to the dark. You, sir, have always to keep close to me."

I led the way. He followed close upon my heels.

Suddenly I paused a moment.

"See; there is a light!"

Sure enough there was, in the inner room—in that inner room in which the safe was kept.

I caught Mr. Burton by the arm.

"Sir, come a little further, You shall see the criminal in his crime."

Then I stole by the outer door into the office in which I had been overtaken by that strange mockery of death. Through the glass partition, sure enough, I saw at a glance that Philip Morris, lantern in hand, was at his old work, busied with the contents of the safe. I leaned right forward on the desk, and tapped with my finger against the glass. He approached the partition; I saw him trembling as he came.

When he was quite close, in my grave clothes I rose straight up, and looking him straight in the face—his pallid, panic-stricken face—I raised my arm above my head, and in a loud voice, cried out:

"Thou thief!"

A wild shriek rang through the night; and sometimes in my ears I seem to hear it still.

When Mr. Burton and I ran in, we found him stricken by a sudden agony of conscience-stricken fear, a bundle of bank-notes in the frenzied grip of his right hand, lying in a fit upon the floor.

M.

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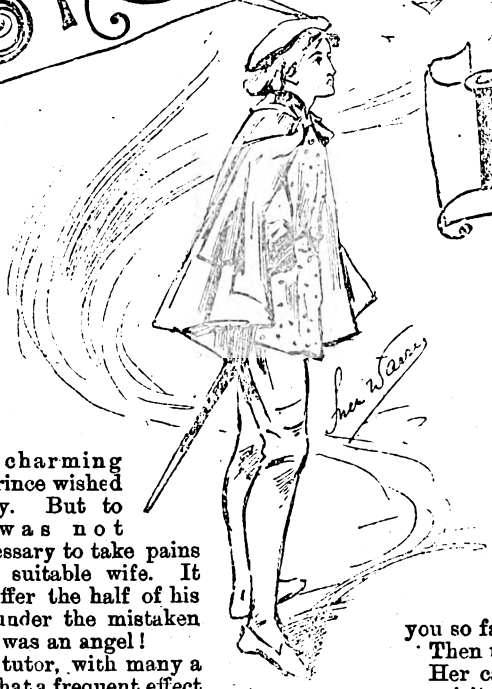
The Changing Butterfly

A Fairy Tale



I.

AVERY charming young prince wished to marry. But to wish was not enough; it was necessary to take pains in order to find a suitable wife. It would never do to offer the half of his throne to a shrew under the mistaken impression that she was an angel!

For the prince's tutor, with many a sigh, had told him that a frequent effect of marriage was the transformation of angels into shrews. The poor man spoke feelingly, for he was himself tied to a shrew, whom in her first youth he had certainly thought angelic.

The tutor's warnings were not thrown away upon the prince, but he could not decide on any satisfactory course of action. He resolved to take a little holiday in Scotland. Possibly the change of air might clear his brain and fortify his nerves for his onerous task.

To Scotland, accordingly, he went. There, one day, as he wandered pensively along the banks of a blue lake, he heard a scream and a splash, and saw something struggling in the water. It was a little old woman, who, while washing her linen in the lake, had leaned over too far and tumbled in head foremost.

The prince unhesitatingly plunged in after her, got her safely out, and placed her upon the bank, not, however, without having a sharp tussle with an enormous fish, which seemed desirous of devouring him and his burden.

II.

Now, the little old woman was a fairy. She was, of course, much obliged to the good prince, and said to him:

"If you had not been here I should inevitably have been devoured by that wicked fish. He is an enchanter, my mortal enemy, who has been lying in wait for me for the last nine hundred and ninety-nine years. I should like to reward you for your great kindness. Tell me what you wish for, and I will help you to obtain it."

"I wish, madam, to marry," replied the prince.

"Ha! ha!" tittered the fairy.

"But I would like to have some means of finding out the true character of my future wife—whether she be an angel or a shrew."

"That, my good friend, is a thing which none can be sure of beforehand. It depends a little upon the woman, and a great deal upon the man. However, I will keep my word to you so far as it is possible."

Then the fairy put a silver whistle to her lips.

Her call was answered instantly by a little, grey, yet exquisitely beautiful butterfly, which alighted upon her finger.

"You see this butterfly?" said the fairy to the prince. "When you have made your choice you have only to say to him: 'Come, fluttering butterfly, and flutter upon the forehead of my beloved!' and he will hasten to do your bidding. Mark well the result. If he become red, that is a sign that your sweetheart has a temper; if he turn green she is a coquette; if rose colour, she is greedy; if blue, she is a gossip. But if the butterfly become *white*, then she is a veritable pearl!"

With these words the fairy and the butterfly disappeared.

III.

FOR a long time the prince travelled about searching for a wife. He visited China, France, Germany, England, and America.

In all these countries he found hosts of charming girls who would have been proud to marry a prince, and who—every one of them—with their downcast eyes and ingenuous smiles, resembled so many little angels.

But invariably when, in obedience to the prince's summons, the fairy's butterfly fluttered upon the fair one's brow, it took sometimes one colour, sometimes another, but it never, never became white.

Upon more than one occasion it displayed all the colours at the same time. Whenever this happened the prince fled immediately to another country, there to renew his vain quest.

It proved, indeed, a most difficult task to find a

woman who was neither greedy, nor coquettish, nor idle, nor talkative, nor passionate.

At length, however, the prince met a very beautiful maiden, the daughter of a rich lord. He felt that even if he failed to win her, he could never wed another. By which it may be perceived that he was very deeply in love indeed.

It was a delicious time for our young prince! The lady was not only beautiful but highly accomplished. She embroidered like a fairy, sang like a seraph, and was full of wit, grace, and good sense.

"I have a good mind to marry her without consulting the butterfly," though the enamoured prince.

Prudence prevailed, however, and the lover whispered very softly—half-hoping that the butterfly would not hear him—the usual formula:

"Come, fluttering butterfly, flutter upon the forehead of my beloved."

But the little grey butterfly, who was for the time the prince's slave, heard and obeyed.

IV.

AT the critical moment, the prince and the maiden were walking together in a lovely garden. Just at the instant when the butterfly made his appearance, and was about to alight upon the fair forehead, the girl cried out suddenly:

"Oh, I am so frightened! Is not that a serpent down there in the grass? Run, my friend, oh! run and see! and kill the horrible thing!"

Naturally, the prince, forgetting the butterfly, ran to the spot indicated. He found no serpent there, and returned to his sweetheart's side with the assurance that she had been mistaken, and that there was nothing to fear.

"Oh, I am so frightened!"

As he was speaking he raised his eyes, and could not repress a joyous exclamation.

For the butterfly was white as the wing of the whitest swan, white as the purest snow of the North Pole.

The same evening he proposed for the lady's hand, and eight days later the wedding took place.

And in fifteen days' time, the prince had made the disconcerting discovery that his wife possessed every possible fault, and that, therefore, he should not be anything like so happy as he had expected to be.

V.

MAD with disappointment, he returned to Scotland in order to find the old fairy, and acquaint her with his ill-luck.

After hearing his tale, the fairy conferred with her butterfly, and then remarked:

"Well, I don't know what to think! The butterfly assures me that as soon as he touched the princess's forehead, he turned all colours, and that they were very pronounced! I must believe what he says, for he always speaks the truth, and his judgment is infallible!"

"My sight must have been in fault," replied the poor prince. And there was nothing for it but to return to his fallen angel.

VI.

ONE day, when she was in a more amiable mood than usual, she and her husband were talking over old times. The prince took the opportunity of inquiring whether his wife remembered their stroll in the magnificent garden, and the strange terror that had seized her there.

"Oh, yes! I remember it well!" replied the princess. "as well as if it happened yesterday! How simple you were in those days! I was perfectly well aware that there was no serpent about; but having a moment before stolen a glance at my pocket-mirror, I had observed that my face was slightly red. Fearing lest this should displease you, I wished to put a little powder on it, if I could do so without being seen. And so—" She paused.

"And so?" prompted the now much interested prince.

"And so I invented for you that small commission. See how retentive my memory is! I remember how at that moment a tiresome grey butterfly came fluttering about my head. I shook my powder-puff over him, and was extremely amused to see him turn as white all over as a painted clown."

EDITH SUMMERS.

There are Many - - - - -

Less beautiful covers than that of "PEARSON'S MAGAZINE" for June. And the contents are consistent with the design on the cover—Refined and Good.

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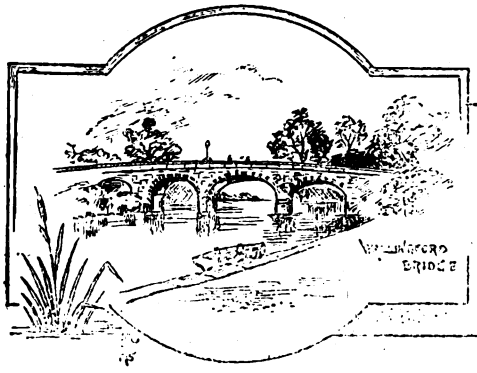
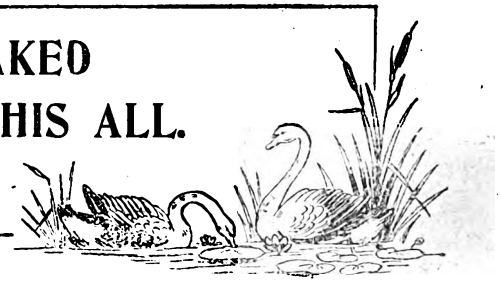


HE STAKED HIS ALL.



"That is the Princess," said an old diplomatist, referring to a beautiful woman just entering the room, "whose husband won her at cards. She is seventy years of age, yet her figure is as straight, and her complexion as fresh as that of a girl of twenty. I will tell you the story, using fictitious names, of course. It is too well remembered for me to do otherwise, and occurred during my embassy to the Court of St. Petersburg during the reign of Nicholas.

"Nowhere in the world," he continued, "do they gamble as they gamble in Russia. Not only is it a passion which has its frenzy, but a luxury which carries with it obligations. An officer who doesn't play is regarded as beneath consideration, and a man who doesn't from time to time risk his entire fortune at cards, as a churlish fellow only worthy of contempt.

"Maria Feodorowna, *née* Princess of D——, rich, beautiful, accomplished, and maid of honour to the Tsarina, married the Prince Tcheretzoff for love. He was unquestionably devoted to her. Tcheretzoff was a capable officer, a major-general at the age when one is usually a lieutenant, an aide-de-camp to the Emperor An intelligent and earnest student, with excellent qualities of heart and person; he had one fault—he did not gamble.

"'Why is it, General,' said the Tsar to him one day, 'that you do not play? Come, take a game of preference with me.'

"Such had been Tcheretzoff's aversion to gambling, however, that he was obliged to confess his ignorance of the game.

"'What!' cried the Tsar, 'not know how to play? Here, Augustinoff,' addressing one of his staff, 'as past master of the art, take the imbecile and give him lessons.'

"A command as positive as this was not to be lightly regarded. Tcheretzoff found himself forced to submit. The Prince Augustinoff, to whose teachings the command of the Emperor had consigned him, was undoubtedly the most skilful player in Russia—cool, prudent, master of the game and of himself, the best guarantee of success.

"The Prince Augustinoff devoted himself to the task with zeal, and was even prodigal of lessons and counsels. In a short time Tcheretzoff became, under his tuition, an excellent player. He played from inspiration, according to his humour, sometimes winning, sometimes losing, but always sufficiently well to establish an even balance, an equilibrium of chances, as it were, which soon gained for him the reputation of the best player of the season.

"It would have been better for him had he lost; perhaps he would then have escaped the passion against which he had so long defended himself. Success intoxicated him, and card-playing became the occupation of his life. He would be seized with what for want of a better name, we will call frenzies of gambling, during which, forgetful of everything, he would pay someone to play with him if an adversary could be had in no other way. Unfortunately, such extreme measures are rarely necessary in Russia; adversaries are only too plentiful for all who want them.

"One day Tcheretzoff had been sitting at the gambling-table since two o'clock in the morning, winning steadily. Accumulated beside him were his gains, 100,000 roubles, and this did not include 200,000 more in the I.O.U's of his companions.

"'I mean,' said he, abruptly addressing the party, 'to stake everything that I have won this evening upon the chances of a single game.'

"'How much is that?' asked a gentleman, at that moment coming into the room.

"'Three hundred thousand roubles,' answered Tcheretzoff, turning at the sound of Augustinoff's voice—for it was he who had entered—'but why? Do you wish to play.'

"'Yes—I'll accept the challenge.' And seating himself at the table the game began.

"Although their comrades were accustomed to high play, circumstances combined to make the coming contest the most extraordinory on record. The stake was simply enormous, the contestants the best players of the empire, and though of late he had withdrawn from the list of those who regularly gambled, it was well known that Augustinoff had made an exception in favour of the man before him, in order to teach him, as far as possible, his own skill. The struggle between master and pupil excited the liveliest interest. For a while the game was undecided—the chances and skill being about even. At last a bold stroke of Augustinoff won. Tcheretzoff pushed towards him the money and the I.O.U.'s won from his former adversaries.

"'Now for my revenge,' he said, as, this adjustment made and accepted, they returned to the game.

"'For what amount do we play now?' demanded Augustinoff.

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"'The same—300,000 roubles.'

"'But——'

"'Isn't it enough?'

"'No! You have lost nothing as yet. The sums staked have been only the winnings of the evening; add more to it!'

"'Very well,' responded Tcheretzoff, 'I will add another hundred thousand roubles.'

"But this time Augustinoff lost.

"'We are not going to stop at that,' said he; 'I will play you for five hundred thousand roubles.'

"And fortune was with him.

"'Play on, play on!' cried Tcheretzoff hoarsely, the madness of the gamester shining in his eyes; 'I must have my revenge.'

"'As you please,' said Augustinoff quietly; 'but the stakes must remain at five hundred thousand roubles. I am in shape to-night and you will lose—I feel it.'

"Tcheretzoff was now in a terrible temper, a bad state of mind for a man who would win. Glass after glass of sparkling Cliquot, swallowed with feverish rapidity, instead of quieting him, served only to increase his irritable gloom. Calm, self-possessed, and trusting nothing to chance, Augustinoff opposed him with impassable phlegm—an impenetrable smile. Goaded to frenzy by this indifference, Tcheretzoff played wildly, losing game after game in quick succession. From the way things were going, not a kopeck of his immense fortune would be left.

"'Tis useless to urge me,' he replied, when they intreated him to stop; 'I shall remain until daybreak.'

"'So be it,' said Augustinoff; 'so be it. I will do likewise.'

"The struggle had now assumed a terrible aspect. It was no longer a simple game of cards, but a duel to the death. Each watched the other with the eye of a hawk, seeking to penetrate the secret of his play. Their looks burned, their hands trembled. Calculating chances, computing consequences, they fingered the cards with lightning speed, each striving thus to disconcert his adversary. A single mistake would have been irreparable. All at once Tcheretzoff paused and played hesitatingly. It was the beginning of the end.

"Before the light of day he had lost everything that he possessed, his Moscow palace, his beautiful lands in the central provinces, his magnificent château of Ukraine, the summer home of his wife, from which came the handsomest horses of the Empire. Everything had gone but the diamonds of the Princess Tcheretzoff, and these her husband knew well that he could not touch. His own jewels, even the jewels of his order, and a superb ring, a present from the Tsar, were already pledged.

"Staggering to his feet, Tcheretzoff paced restlessly up and down the hall. His body trembled, his muscles twitched convulsively; his appearance was that of a man in the throes of a mortal agony. Augustinoff, carelessly shuffling the cards and waiting for a new opponent to come and finish the game, still sat at the table. He rose, in astonishment, however, as Tcheretzoff, wheeling suddenly, resumed his place before him.

"'It is not daylight yet,' said Tcheretzoff quietly, as his adversary rose to go; 'the bond said until daylight.'

"'I know that, Tcheretzoff, but——'

"'Sit down, sit down, I say; you cannot go until daylight. Besides, I have something to say to you. Augustinoff,' said he abruptly, in a voice he struggled vainly to control, 'I believe that you love my wife. I know that you loved her as Maria Feodorowna—I believe that you love her still.'

"'Well,' said Augustinoff coldly.

"'I have nothing with which to maintain her, I stake her against all that you have won from me this evening. What say you? Shall it be?'

"Stake the Princess Tcheretzoff upon a game of cards! Augustinoff stood as if turned to stone. Tcheretzoff's misfortune had certainly driven him crazy.

"'What say you?' persisted Tcheretzoff. 'Shall it be?'

"'Yes,' said Augustinoff; 'yes, I accept.' And his eyes flashed like coals of fire. The cool impassive mask of the gamester dropped away—beneath it lay the secret of the soul 'I accept,' he repeated steadily, 'but upon two conditions: First, that I increase the stake upon my side; it is not sufficient. Second, you must pronounce the divorce and assume all responsibility Your wife is without stain, and not a shadow shall fall upon her.'

"'I agree,' said Tcheretzoff; 'and not a shadow shall fall upon her.'

"As they lifted the cards to begin anew, Augustinoff, seized with inexplicable emotion, hesitated. Should he re-open a combat where the woman he loved had been made the stake? Did he fear to lose her? Did he fear a disdainful refusal should the happiness of victory place her in his hands? Torn by these conflicting emotions he commenced the game.

"A profound silence reigned in the gaming-room, broken only by the rustling of the cards falling one upon another. Now and then a voice announced a point, and a counter glided softly upon the cloth to mark the play. Once in a while the adversaries stopped to draw breath, like wrestlers overcome with fatigue. Strength and skill seemed evenly balanced.

"All at once Tcheretzoff laid down his cards. The scale had tipped. A bold and hazardous stroke, which might have brought him victory, had only the more speedily determined his defeat. Then it was that this man, this reckless, desperate gambler, consumed for more than ten hours with the fever of play, resumed the dignity and nobility of the soldier.

"'You have won,' he cried, in a stifled voice. 'won all, but I hold to the engagement.'

"And stumbling to his feet, Tcheretzoff, saluting his opponent as they do when under arms, wheeled and passed from the room. The ghastliness of his face betrayed the torture that racked his heart, but neither he nor his companions dreamed of questioning the validity of the contract.

"The engagement was held to the end. Tcheretzoff was divorced, taking the responsibility upon himself, where it undoubtedly belonged, and the responsibility of the divorced husband in Russia is very great. Not only is he always fined, but frequently suffers imprisonment as well. His offence was great, but as the favourite aide-de-camp of the Tsar, Tcheretzoff was not imprisoned. He sought and obtained the privilege of going to fight the Caucasians. He went, but never returned."

"And the Princess Tcheretzoff?"

"Is now the Princess Augustinoff. Acquiescing in the act of her husband, she obeyed—perhaps with reluctance—the conditions of the challenge. And why not? The man who valued her enough to risk 12,000,000 of francs for her sake unquestionably loved and respected her more than the man who staked her upon a game of cards."

J. Gatesby Gale.

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The Wythecombe Mystery

By John K. Leys, *author of "The Tenth of June," etc., etc.*

SUMMARY.

While on a sketching tour in Wales, Launcelot Vere gets into a dangerous position on the face of a precipice. His life is saved by Winifred Denvers, to whom he becomes engaged. On the wedding morning Launcelot fails to put in an appearance at church, and no news can be heard of him. Miss Unwin, the village schoolmistress, has disappeared at the same time. Harold Kenyon, a friend of Launcelot's, determines to leave Wythecombe in search of his friend, and goes to London. He finds that the missing man has drawn £75 from his bank, and also discovers several sketches of Miss Unwin in the artist's room. Paul Shenstone presses his suit with Katherine Dale, who unwillingly agrees to marry him in October. Winifred is still convinced of Launcelot's innocence of any foul play.

Katherine Dale, A young lady with whom Harold Kenyon is in love.
Paul Shenstone, Engaged to Katherine Dale.
Rev. Mark Denvers, Rector of Wythecombe, and Winifred's father.
Mr. Beaumont, A solicitor, and friendly with Vere.

CHAPTER VI.

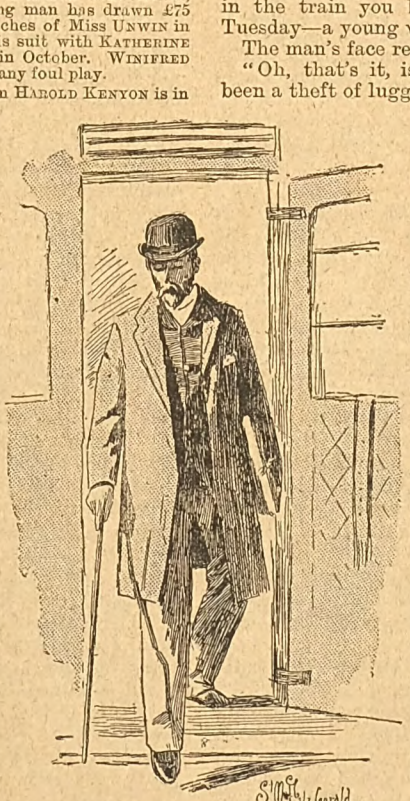
What the Railway Guard had to Tell.

Harold Kenyon could not have been more anxious to set out for London at once, if his own honour, or his own life, had depended on the story the guard had to tell. But duty demanded that he should be at the bank at Darnport on Monday morning and remain there all day. He knew that already he had spent three days in trying to penetrate the darkness in which his friend's fate was shrouded; and he feared that if his employers knew how long he had stayed away from his post they might be disposed to blame him.

But on Monday afternoon he felt free once more; and he travelled up to London by the afternoon train. Next morning he left Paddington at six o'clock, so that the day was still young when he alighted at the little roadside station, where he expected to find Martin, the late guard of the Great Western day express. He had provided himself with a small album, in which were several portraits, among them being a photograph of Launcelot Vere. He had also taken with him the sketch of Miss Unwin's head, which he had found in Vere's studio.

Kenyon could hardly wait till the train had quitted the station before he sought out the station-master.

"I have come all the way from Devonshire," he began, "to ask you one or two questions. A porter told me you could give me some information."



He alighted at the little roadside station.

The ex-guard, a tall, burly fellow, with a red, good-humoured face, looked serious at once.

"You used to act as passenger-guard on the main line, didn't you?"

"Until last Saturday night."

"I have only to ask if you observed one of the passengers in the train you brought from Exeter to London last Tuesday—a young woman of rather striking appearance."

The man's face relaxed into a smile.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" he said. "I thought there had been a theft of luggage, maybe, or something of that sort. Yes, I did notice a young lady. Would I know her portrait? Perhaps I might."

Harold unrolled the sketch of Miss Unwin and held it up.

The station-master nodded.

"You've got her there, sir; and as handsome a face, to my mind, as ever I saw. That's the young lady, sure enough."

"Where did she join your train?" asked Kenyon.

"At Exeter—at least, I saw her there first. She asked me how long there was to wait, and whether she would have time to send a telegram. I said she might, but it would be better to write it on a scrap of paper if she could, and I would send it to the telegraph office for her. There was a chance that she might miss the train."

"Did she write the telegram?"

"She did, sir. But may I ask the object of these inquiries?"

"Perhaps you have not heard. A friend of mine has disappeared, and——"

"Oh, I see!"

The station-master smiled, as if he now quite understood the situation.

"Do you remember the name of the person to whom the telegram was sent?"

"Well," said the ex-guard, in a hesitating way; "it seems to me rayther doubtful if I should give that information. You see, the young lady sort of confided in me."

"If it were not sent to my friend I have no concern with it," said Harold hastily. "Would you remember the name if I told it you?"

"No; I don't think I should."

"Nor the purport of the message?"

Martin smiled, and hesitated.

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"I assure you," said Kenyon, "no harm of any kind is intended to the young lady. I have neither the power nor the will to injure her in any way whatever. If my friend has not eloped with her of course I have no concern with her. If he *has*—well, if he has, I shall have no further interest in either of them. *Now* do you feel at liberty to tell me what you know?"

"Perhaps your friend was a married man, sir?" asked the station-master, with a side look at his questioner.

"Something like it."

"I hope he wasn't the same gentleman, then, for *her* sake."

"Was the message something like this: 'I am coming by such a train'; or, 'Meet me at such an hour'?"

"Well, yes, I may say it was, sir."

"And you can't say positively whom the telegram was sent to?"

"No, I can't at this moment."

"When the train got to Paddington did anyone meet the young lady?"

Martin was silent.

Kenyon was almost beside himself with anxiety and impatience. But he controlled himself, and quietly assured the station-master that he was in no way connected with the young lady, and repeated that he had not the smallest desire to injure her. At last he succeeded in allaying the worthy man's scruples.

"I would be above playing the spy on any man, least of all on any woman," he said at length. "But I couldn't help noticing them. They came and stood close to where I was, and talked in a sort of whisper. Then they took a turn up the platform and back, still talking very earnest like; and then they came back and stood a little while, and then they went away together."

"In a cab?"

"No; walking. And now that's all I can tell, if you were to question me till doomsday."

"I can't tell you how sorry I am to give you all this trouble; but there is one thing more you can do for me. You noticed the gentleman, I suppose?"

Martin nodded, in an aggrieved kind of way.

"Will you kindly glance through these photographs, then, and see if you can identify any of them as his portrait."

Martin put his hands behind his back.

"It is only to ease my mind, and the minds of—the gentleman's friends. If you can't pick out a photograph, and say: 'That is the likeness of the man who met the young lady, whose portrait you showed me just now, at Paddington Station, and went away with her'—If you can't say: 'I can swear that is the man,'—I will at once trouble myself no more about the girl, but will search for my friend elsewhere. If you *do* recognise him, I will give myself no more concern about either of them."

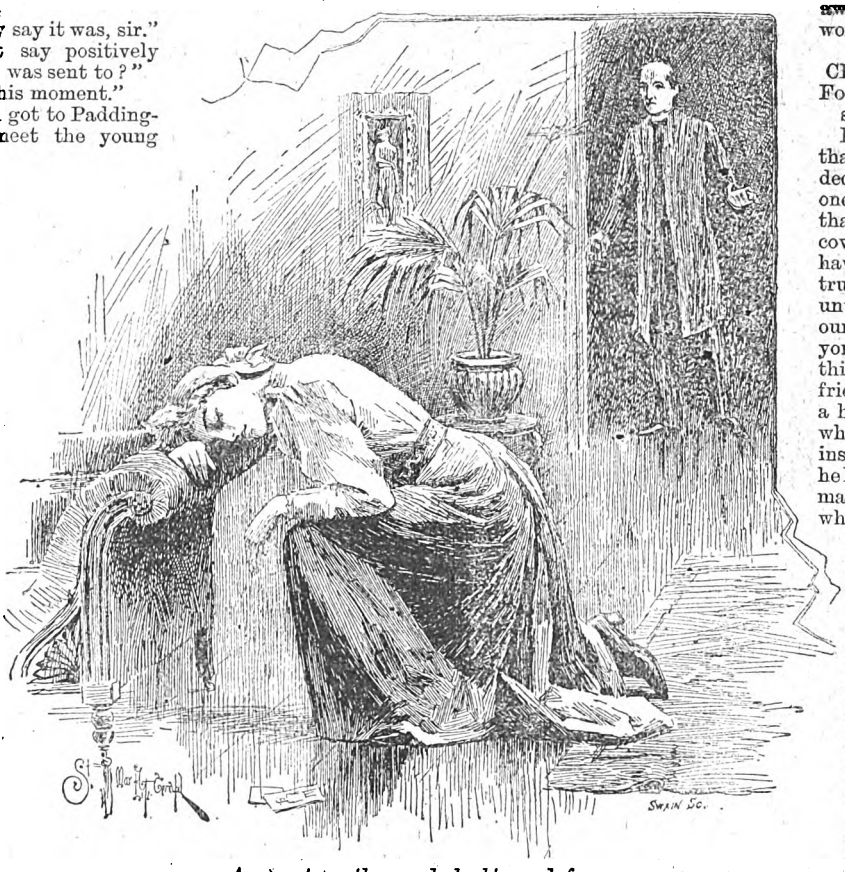
Thus reassured, Martin took the album. Kenyon's hand shook a little as he held it out to him.

One by one the leaves were turned, the eyes of both being fixed on the portraits as they successively came into view.

"That's the man!" said the station-master suddenly, pointing with his forefinger.

It was Launcelot Vere's portrait which he indicated.

Kenyon turned away without a word.



A prey to a thousand doubts and fears.

CHAPTER VII.

Found on Hampstead Heath.

It is sad to find that we have been deceived in any one, but it is more than sad to discover that one we have loved and trusted has been unworthy even of our regard. Kenyon could not think of his former friend now, but as a heartless wretch who had wantonly insulted the girl he had promised to marry—a coward who, rather than confess his pitiable weakness, had hidden himself away from his friends, leaving them to suffer whatever anxiety his conduct might cause them without a word of explanation.

And although he told himself that his own feelings were of no account, he could not but feel that Vere's disgrace was in some degree reflected upon himself. He had almost insulted Shenstone for suggesting that there might be a connection between Vere's sudden disappearance and that of Miss Unwin. He had in a sense made himself Vere's advocate. And now, what was he to say? How was he to face Katherine Dale or the indignant Rector? What message was he to send to the unhappy girl who was waiting for news, tortured by anxiety, and a prey to a thousand doubts and fears? Miss Denvers must be told the result of his inquiries, and she would, of course, draw the natural inference from the facts. Everyone must now advise her that the one thing she had to do was to strive to blot out Launcelot's image from her heart and his name from her memory. But, alas! would any such thing be possible for her now?

Before returning to London, Harold sent a telegram to

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"Three-and-six to pay," said the man.

Miss Dale, stating the result of his inquiries, and leaving it to her to tell the news to Winnie Denvers or not, as she might think best.

There was one thing Kenyon thought he would do before he went back to Devonshire, and that was to write a note to Vere, saying that the reason of his strange disappearance was no longer a secret to people at Wythecombe. Vere would be sure to come or send to his rooms sooner or later; and if the note reached him it might have the effect of averting trouble in the future.

It was not an easy letter to write. Harold felt that he could not address his former friend as one addresses a stranger; yet it was not his place to heap reproaches on his head. After many abortive attempts, he penned a note without any formal beginning or ending. It ran thus:

"The cause of your absence last Thursday has been ascertained. You have chosen your own course, and it is not for me to upbraid you. I defended you as long as it was possible. Of course I can do so no longer.

"Harold Kenyon."

This note Harold put into an envelope, which he sealed and addressed; and as the hotel at which he was staying was not far from Cumber Street, in which Vere's rooms were situated, he thought he might call there and leave it. It was barely possible that something might have transpired there since his last visit.

As he drew near the house he saw that a man with a handbarrow was at the door; and just as he ascended the steps the man took something bulky from his barrow and carried it to the house. Harold threw a careless glance at it. It was a brown portmanteau—the very portmanteau he had missed when he had examined Vere's rooms three days before.

"Where did you fetch that from, my man?" he asked eagerly.

The man stared at him, and rang the bell in silence.

"Can't you tell me? It is very important that I should know."

Still no answer.

The door opened, and the tenant of the house, who inhabited the lower flat, presented herself.

"Three-and-six to pay," said the man, handing her the portmanteau.

"The gentleman's not at home. You'll have to come back again," answered the woman.

The messenger without a word turned away, carrying the portmanteau with him.

"Here! I'll pay the money," Kenyon called out. "But you must tell me where you come from."

"Bell and Watson, Long Acre."

"How did you get this portmanteau?"

"Fetched it from here on Saturday week to have a new lock put on it. It was to have been sent back last Tuesday but we forgot it; that's a fact."

"Strange!" thought Kenyon, as the man went away, "Poor Launcelot must have yielded to some sudden, uncontrollable impulse. He seems to have made no preparations for his flight, except providing himself with money. I thought he had taken the portmanteau with him, but it is clear that I was mistaken."

He hesitated a moment as to whether he should leave the note he had written for Vere; but finally he did as he had intended, and left the house.

From Donegal Street, Kenyon went to the City, and called at the head office of the bank which he represented at Darnport, intending to explain to Mr. Bonnington, one of the partners, the reason of his having deserted his post for the last two or three days. Mr. Bonnington, however, was not in town that day; and as Kenyon much preferred to confide in him, he decided to defer his explanation for the present.

He was leaving the bank when he heard his own name pronounced from behind, while a hand was laid on his shoulder. He turned and beheld a small wrinkled old man, dressed in old-fashioned black clothes, with a long black silk stock, of the kind fashionable fifty years ago, wound round his throat. The old man's figure was thin and bent, but his eyes were bright, and his lips had that firm expression peculiar to men of energetic temperament.

Harold knew him well. His name was Daunt. He was a solicitor, one of the old-fashioned, steady-going sort who tread the fertile furrows of a conveyancing practice, back and forwards continuously, to their lives' end. Mr. Daunt was one to whom men had recourse when they were in difficulty, and to whom men seldom had recourse in vain. He had held out a helping hand to Harold Kenyon when he was beginning the struggle of life, a fact which Harold gratefully remembered.

"Well, how are you getting on at Darnport?" he asked when the two had shaken hands.

"Pretty well, thank you. I have no reason to complain."

The old man looked at him with his shrewd eyes.

"You are in trouble about something, I see," he observed. "Not a love affair, eh?"

"I have been much perplexed about a friend of mine, who has gone off somewhere without a moment's warning on the very eve of his wedding."

"Repented of his bargain probably," said the old lawyer, with a grin.

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"No," said Harold; "I don't think that was the reason."

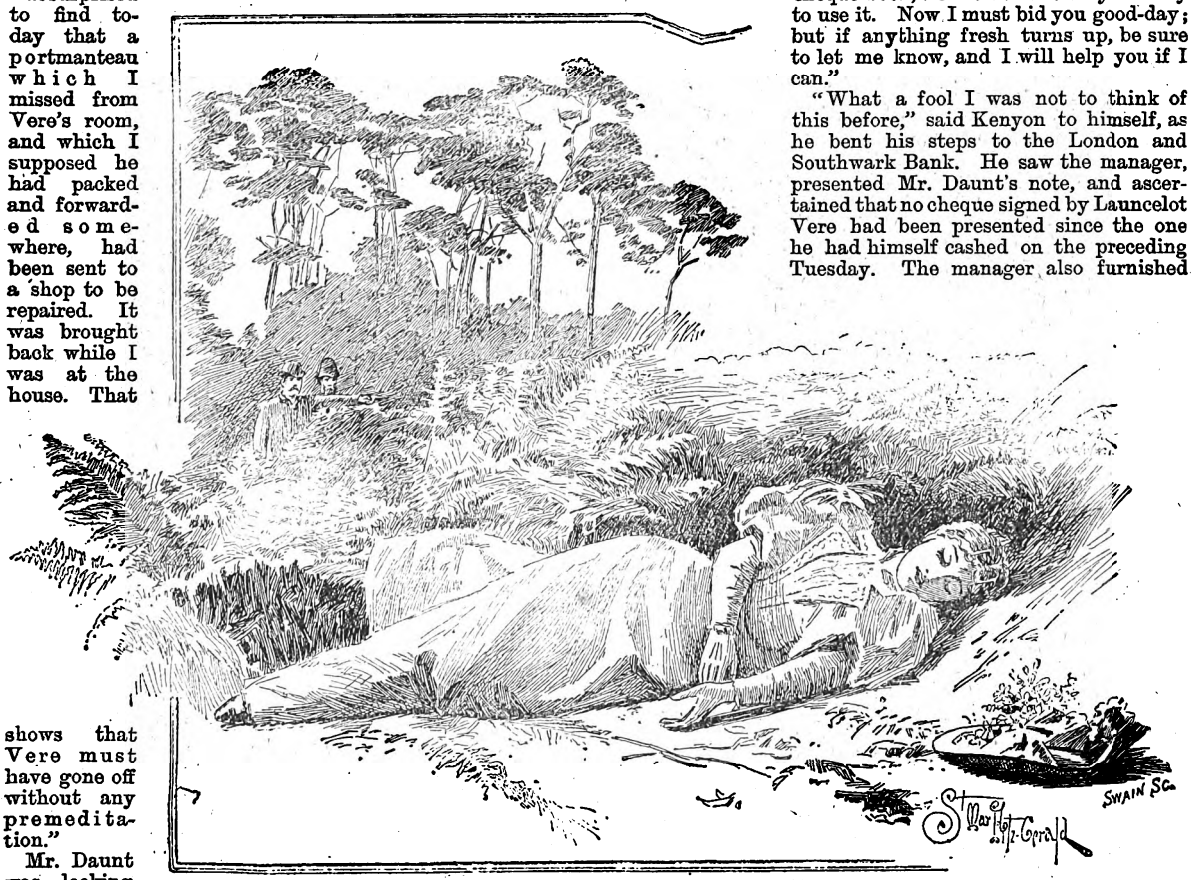
"Eh? What else could make him play a trick of that sort? Head over ears in debt, perhaps, and nothing to pay the honeymoon expenses with."

"No; he drew seventy-five pounds from the bank the day he disappeared."

"Indeed! Come up to my office and tell me about it."

Harold was only too glad to accept this offer. Mr. Daunt led him to a small room, furnished with queer old-fashioned hair-cloth chairs and Pembroke tables, and seated him by the fire. The narrative was not a long one, and Harold ended it by saying:

"The guard's testimony seemed to me conclusive; but I was surprised to find to-day that a portmanteau which I missed from Vere's room, and which I supposed he had packed and forwarded somewhere, had been sent to a shop to be repaired. It was brought back while I was at the house. That shows that Vere must have gone off without any premeditation."



The body of a young woman had been found on Hampstead Heath.

Mr. Daunt was looking steadily into the fire. He seemed to be weighing the matter over in his mind. He offered no remark.

"What do you think of it, sir?" Harold asked.

"I think nothing at all as yet," he said snappishly.

Harold waited in patience and in silence for some minutes.

"Has it ever struck you that your friend may have done something that made it necessary to hide himself?" he asked.

"Never! Launcelot was not a man to commit crimes."

"Hum! Or he may have met with foul play. If he had that seventy-five pounds in his pocket that would be temptation enough for many a London rough. Did you find a cheque-book among your friend's papers?" Mr. Daunt added after a short pause.

"No, I didn't."

"He probably had it in his pocket. You had better go to the manager of his bank. Do you know where he banked?"

"At the London and Southwark."

"Very good. I will give you a note to the manager. Ascertain from him the number of the notes paid to your friend on the day of his disappearance, and these numbers you can afterwards send to Scotland Yard. Find out also from the manager whether any more cheques have been drawn since that day, and beg him to let you know whenever another cheque comes in. If your friend is in hiding he will be sure to want more money before long. If he has been robbed the thieves will not have overlooked the cheque-book, and ten to one they will try to use it. Now I must bid you good-day; but if anything fresh turns up, be sure to let me know, and I will help you if I can."

"What a fool I was not to think of this before," said Kenyon to himself, as he bent his steps to the London and Southwark Bank. He saw the manager, presented Mr. Daunt's note, and ascertained that no cheque signed by Launcelot Vere had been presented since the one he had himself cashed on the preceding Tuesday. The manager also furnished Kenyon with the numbers of the notes handed to Vere on that occasion, and promised to communicate with him if any cheque purporting to be signed by Vere should be handed in for payment.

It was almost closing time when Harold left the bank. The street lamps were already lit, and the newsboys were shouting out the names of the evening journals.

"Murder of a woman on 'Ampstead 'Eath!" cried an urchin, thrusting his paper into Harold's face. Harold bought the journal, and turned into a restaurant to get some dinner. As he waited for his meal he opened the paper in his hand, and his eye fell on a paragraph headed

MURDER OR SUICIDE—WHICH?

He read it through without any special emotion. It was such a paragraph as one meets with too often in a London

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newspaper. The body of a young woman, well-dressed, and of attractive appearance, had been found on Hampstead Heath. It was impossible to say how many hours the poor girl's body had been lying there. A revolver was found beside it; and the natural inference would have been that the unfortunate girl had taken her own life, but for two circumstances. The first was that women very seldom shoot themselves; they drown or poison themselves when they are bent on self-destruction. The second was that the dress was not scorched, as it would almost certainly have been if the girl had held the pistol with her own hand when it was fired. There were no letters or other documents found on the young woman's person; but there was a photograph in a small leather case—the photograph of a gentleman. And the linen worn by the girl was marked J. U.

When he read these concluding lines, Harold started from his seat. J. U.! He did not know Miss Unwin's Christian name; but U. was an unusual initial. He must know at once whether this murdered girl was Miss Unwin or not; he felt sure he could recognise her from the sketches and the picture he had found in Launcelot's study.

Throwing the price of his untasted dinner on the table, Harold hurried from the restaurant, hailed a hansom, and was soon being rapidly carried to the place where the body lay.

A woman was sobbing in a corner of the room.

"Her mother, sir," whispered a policeman.

"Then you know the poor thing's name?"

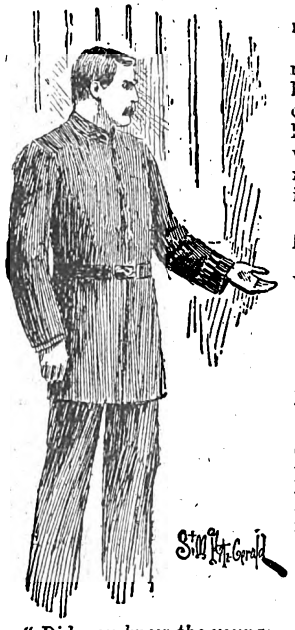
"Yes, sir. We know it now—Jane Unwin."

The man drew down a corner of the sheet, and Harold threw a pitying glance at the cold face that lay beneath it. It was the same face as that depicted in the sketches and the finished portrait which Harold had seen.

"Did you know the young lady, sir?" asked the policeman.

And Harold was glad to be able to answer:

"No; I never saw her to my knowledge."



"Did you know the young lady, sir?"

The constable turned to re-arrange the sheet; and as he did so Harold caught sight of a photograph in a brown leather case. The man's back was still turned; the weeping mother had hidden her eyes in her handkerchief.

Harold stole one look at the photograph.

It was Launcelot Vere, with a smile upon his face.

CHAPTER VIII.

At the Inquest.

Bewildered, sick at heart, Kenyon turned away and left the building.

He had searched in every corner for a plausible explanation for Vere's conduct—for something that might prove that he was not the unprincipled scoundrel people imagined him to be—and this was the result! He shuddered when he thought of that poor creature's lifeless body, lying there desolate and despised, mutely appealing for pity and for vengeance. He was glad to think that it would not be necessary for him to appear at the inquest.

When he got back to his hotel he found a telegram from the bank asking him to remain in town for another day or two, and, of course, he delayed his departure accordingly. Next morning, however, he was told, when he called at the bank, that his services would not be required until the following day.

"She is my daughter—my only child."

As Kenyon, with nothing particular to do, strolled slowly westward, he recollected that the inquest on the body of Jane Unwin was to be held that forenoon; and he thought it possible that if he attended the inquiry as a spectator he might learn something about Vere, and find out why he had chosen the eve of his wedding as the moment of his elopement. He no longer felt for Vere anything of the painful anxiety he had felt up to Tuesday morning. He believed—he could not doubt—that the man was a murderer. Yet he was curious, even anxious, to hear something about him. Had he been discovered, or was he still in hiding? If he had been found, would he be taken into custody at once on suspicion? Would he confess that he had shot the poor girl, or would he deny his guilt?

Harold, in spite of his changed feelings towards Vere, was naturally anxious to learn what had happened, and what might be expected to befall his former friend, and he determined to go to Hampstead and ascertain what was going on.

There were one or two things which he had to attend to before setting out for "The Spaniards," where the inquest was to be held. He had to send a message to the bank, and call for a moment at his hotel.

While in the hotel it occurred to him that he had seen an empty case, which might belong to a revolver, in Launcelot Vere's sitting-room. If he could get hold of the revolver that had been found beside Miss Unwin's body, and try whether it fitted this empty case, he would have a strong proof of Vere's guilt, or, on the other hand, a piece of evidence in favour of his innocence. From the hotel to Vere's rooms was but a step. Kenyon went there, took possession of the empty case, and slipped it into the outer pocket of his overcoat. Then he took a train to Hampstead.

When Harold entered the room in which the inquiry was being held, a tall, gaunt woman with iron-grey hair was in the act of taking the oath.

"Your name is Maria Unwin?" asked the Coroner.

The woman bowed.

"And you are a widow, I believe?"

The witness hesitated for a moment.

"I am not a widow," she said, "although I have passed as one for some years. I have lived apart from my husband and earned my own living."

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"Well—you have seen the body of the deceased girl. Do you recognise her?"

"She is my daughter—my only child."

"Did she live with you?"

"Only when she happened to be out of a situation, or during the holidays."

"What was her occupation?"

"She was a schoolmistress. She had a situation as parish schoolmistress at Wythecombe, near Darnport."

"When did you see her last?"

"At the Easter holidays. I am housekeeper to a Mr. Gordon, and I got permission for my daughter to stay with me during the holidays."

"You are sure you have not seen your daughter since?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"When did you hear from her last?"

"About a month ago."

"Was there anything in that letter, or in her previous letters, to lead you to suppose that she was in trouble of any kind?"

Again the witness hesitated.

"I thought she was unhappy, but she did not tell me the reason."

"Do you know the reason?"

No answer.

"Come, now, Mrs. Unwin. I am sorry to press you; but really we must get at the truth. Had your daughter a love affair?"

"Not for some time—not since last year."

The Coroner paused a moment. He then took the photograph which had been found on the body of Jane Unwin, and put it into witness's hands.

"Do you recognise that face?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Whose portrait is it?"

"Mr. Vere's."

"Where does he live?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Do you know his Christian name?"

"Launcelot."

"Where did your daughter meet him?"

"At the house of Mr. Pascoe, my last employer," explained Mrs. Unwin, who answered the questions put her very straightforwardly.

"When was that?"

"Last summer—I mean the summer of last year. My daughter was in weak health, and she left her situation, as the work was too hard for her, perhaps two months before the midsummer holidays. She spent these two months, and also the holiday time, about three months altogether, with me. Of course, I had permission from Mr. Pascoe. She helped me with the housekeeping and needlework."

"Just so. Now, this Mr. Vere. Was he a relation of your employer?"

"No, sir. Mr. Pascoe had no relations that I ever heard of, except Mr. Abbot, his nephew. But Mr. Vere was a good deal about the house. He used to stay for two or three weeks at a time, especially if he had a picture to paint."

"Oh! Mr. Vere is an artist, then?"

"I burnt it soon after reading it."

"Yes, sir."

"Were he and your daughter thrown much together?"

"Not unless—only when she sat as a model."

"Did that happen frequently?"

"Pretty often. My daughter was handsome, and she had a fine figure. Mr. Vere drew her face dozens of times."

"Now, Mrs. Unwin, I cannot avoid asking you this: Was there any question of love or marriage between these two?"

At this plain—brutally plain—question Mrs. Unwin's tears burst out afresh. A more skilful examiner could have elicited all that was necessary without the slightest trouble; but the Coroner was a medical man, with very limited ideas as to the mode of conducting a judicial inquiry. For a time nothing could be heard in the room but the mother's sobs, with a running accompaniment of apparently impertinent questions, repeated over and over again in the harsh voice of the Coroner. By-and-bye she made answers of some sort, and the coroner obligingly pieced her answers together after this sort of way:

"So it comes to this, my good woman—Mr. Vere paid your daughter some attentions, and seemed to be in love with her. You began to fear that your daughter's good name would be compromised, or, at all events, that her peace of mind might be destroyed, and you insisted on her taking the post that was offered her at Wythecombe, so as to be out of harm's way. Is that what you would say?"

"Yes, sir. That's quite correct."

"Do you know whether your daughter and Mr. Vere corresponded?"

"That I can't tell."

"Or whether they had met lately?"

"I fancied, from a chance expression in Jane's last letter, that Mr. Vere had either met her, or written to her, not long ago."

"Have you the letter here?"

"No; I burnt it soon after reading it. It seemed unimportant at the time."

"Do you know when your daughter left Wythecombe?

"No, sir, I don't."

"Nor where she stayed the night before last?"

"No, sir."

"Do you know whether she has seen Mr. Vere since she left her situation?"

"I think——"

"Never mind what you think. Is there anything that you have seen or heard from which you could infer that they had met, or that they had not met?"

"Nothing whatever, sir. Jane was always rather close about her own affairs; I was left to guess at the state of matters between her and Mr. Vere. She never told me that he had said he loved her, or had promised to marry her; but I thought he was fond of her in a way."

The poor woman again broke down; and the coroner said the court would adjourn for half-an-hour.

(To be continued.)

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A MADMAN'S STORY.

I HAVE succeeded. This was very easy however. My purpose was this: to commit a crime, to profit by it and go unpunished, a concise programme that I have filled to the letter. I will relate it to you. I believe I am justified in saying I displayed some ingenuity.

First the crime, *voici*. I had espoused a girl without fortune. I was a simple employé at two thousand two hundred francs per year, but I was very content. My tastes were always modest. My wife, who was an orphan, had one sister. Marie and Blanche, two pretty names. I had espoused Marie. Blanche lived with us. All went well. At first a son, and then a daughter. My salary was increased to three thousand francs, and I had nothing of which to complain.

One day a notary wrote to me. I was greatly surprised. I had had, I avow, little relation with these honourable gentlemen. My surprise increased when the worthy notary informed me that a merchant of Calcutta, uncle to my wife and her sister, had died and left them a heritage of a million francs.

That is to say, five hundred thousand francs each—barabi—bibari—hold! why do I write this, now—bira—biba—a half million for my wife.

* * * * *

The inheritance was promptly arranged. I had an income of twenty-five thousand francs; that is a handsome figure, is it not? My sister-in-law had an equal share. We put the house on a good footing at once—domestics, carriages, etc. I have always loved the arts. I bought choice pictures and statuary. For the first time in my life I patronised a fashionable tailor. I had an air *tout-à-fait distingué*, I assure you. My hand is elegant, my foot is small, and all the ladies envied me my luxuriant locks. I am what is called a handsome man; only at the end of a very short time I felt profoundly vexed that half a million had fallen to my sister-in-law. It would have been a genuine satisfaction—I dissimulate not—to have the million entire, since I was charged with a wife and children, and this old woman had no one but herself to look after, don't you see?

Then the idea came to me to kill her. My wife was her sole inheritor. Her sister dispatched, the million would come to us intact and I could put it to good use. *Voilà*, that is what I said to myself that evening in chatting with the two sisters. Then I resolved to assassinate Blanche. Only, being intelligent, I searched means to commit this crime without any danger. I read all the collections of *causes célèbres*, and I soon came to the conclusion that assassins were almost invariably betrayed by the very care which they took to conceal their criminal intentions. Barabi—bibari. Singular, these syllables always running through my head and springing to my lips without my knowing why.

I have always had a weakness for reading scientific works, particularly those that treat of medicine. I read the "Manual of Hallucinations" of Brière de Boismont, "La Folie" of Movel, "La Crime et La Folie" of Mandeley. It was in the latter book that I found the outline of a plan very ingenious and very useful in my emergency. And this is what I did:

One morning I went to the office of Dr. Laussedat, the most renowned specialist in brain disorders of modern times. He received me very politely, and I said to him: "Doctor, I come to make a terrible avowal. I am rich; I am happy; I adore my wife and children. I have no cause to hate any person on the face of the earth. Nevertheless, I sometimes find myself in a frightful state."

I spoke in a dry sort of tone, the eyes a little widened, and my lips contracted at intervals.

"Proceed," he said.

I bowed my head, and in a hollow voice continued:

"Sometimes, when I am in the midst of my family, I am all at once seized with an insane desire to kill someone. There succeeds, within myself, a terrible combat. I feel my hands involuntarily attracted towards the knife that is beside me at the table. Whom should I wish to slay? I know not. My wife, my children, my sister-in-law? In my hideous nightmare I should not choose. I resist some time, fearing that one might read in my eyes the horrible secret that haunts me. I close my hands and bury the nails in my flesh to arouse myself.

"At the commencement a physical impression was sufficient to dissipate this hallucination. Without attracting attention I arose and went to my chamber. A dash of cold water on the forehead restored calm. The spectre disappeared and I returned smiling.

"But for some time now the attacks have been more and more frequent. I realise that resistance of will and reason becomes daily more and more feeble. I begin to fear that some fatal day I may throw myself upon one of those I love and plunge a knife into her heart. Doctor, I have come to you to make a confession—I fear myself—you are the only one that is able to save me."

M. Laussedat listened to me with the utmost attention.

"Tell me," said he, "have you not remarked some symptoms premonitory to these attacks?"

"Yes, indeed," I responded. "At first there is a heaviness of the head, as if my brain was too weighty, and rolled about in the skull, and after that a compression of the chest, a contraction of the heart, and other peculiar sensations."

"It is well," said the Doctor. "I assure you that your case is one that can be easily cured. Follow exactly the treatment that I am about to prescribe, and I will answer for the result."

He wrote a long prescription which I took away after thanking him in the most earnest manner. Bibari—babari—bu—ba—bi—*Tenez!* this refrain annoys me.

I followed punctiliously—in appearance, you understand—the instructions of the Doctor. My room was encumbered with phials. My wife became uneasy. I reassured her the best that I was able. But from time to time I fixed a haggard look upon her. She questioned me. I replied evasively. I allowed three months to pass. At the end of that time I sought the Doctor again.

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"*Eh bien!*" he cried as soon as he perceived me. "I hope you have chased away the black butterflies."

I burst into tears. I was a victim of fatality. In place of being cured these attacks had become more and more frequent. Sometimes I shut myself up at home, sometimes I took long walks about the city, the fatigue aiding to calm me. But the wave mounted, mounted. I had something on the lips like the taste of blood!

"Monsieur," I finally said to him, "I come to ask you a great service."

"Command me," he replied in a tone of commiseration.

"I implore you to cause me to be inclosed in a retreat for the insane."

He seemed to be surprised beyond measure at my request.

"And to what end?" he asked.

"I know," said I, "*I know* that I am on the eve of a terrible crisis. The symptoms that I have enumerated to you are more violent than ever and more frequent. To-morrow, perhaps, I shall do some great harm, I feel certain. Order me to be confined. I shall be treated as one insane, by *douches*, the strait-jacket. I wish to be cured," I cried, sobbing. "Aid me—save me!"

The eminent practician was moved. This physiological subject interested him. I continued:

"Only, not to disquiet my family, I wish them to remain ignorant of the horrible extremity to which I am reduced. I will pretend that business requires a journey of two or three months. I will disappear during that period, writing home whenever the lucidity of my mind will permit. Then, when the treatment, energetic in the extreme, restores my normal condition, I will return home and resume my place at the family fireside, certain this time not to redden it with blood."

The Doctor felt my pulse, sounded my chest, and studied the play of my internal organs, and finally declared that I was right in my determination. I had no *lésion* of the brain; my case was simply an affection of the nerves that would speedily yield to seclusion and treatment. He consented to lend himself to the deceit I meditated. He would place me in a *maison de santé*, of which he was the chief director, feeling sure that in a few weeks my mental equilibrium would be restored.

I returned home and had no trouble in persuading my wife of the necessity for a journey. She had remarked certain inquietudes, certain *bizarreries* that change of scene and surroundings would dispel, she said.

The next day I entered the *maison de santé*—barabi—bibari. It was luxurious and well located. It was very expensive but—barabi. That cursed refrain! It maddens me! And why? why?

I remained there three months. At the end of a fortnight I simulated a violent excess of delirium. I threw myself upon one of the assistants and nearly strangled him. Afterwards I underwent the punishment of the *douche*, twisting myself about like a man in convulsions. Then I became calm, and little by little resumed my natural state. I was watched constantly for six weeks. Not one day did Monsieur Laussedat fail to pay me a visit, and soon he reported a sensible amelioration in my condition. I laughed a low laugh all within myself. Those wise doctors!

I knew he was very much flattered because the case fitted exactly with a pet theory of his regarding the cure of the insane by an exercise of their own will. He felicitated me on my energy, and encouraged me to persevere. For my part I exhibited an exemplary docility. I kept carefully in the current of the imaginary symptoms which pronounced my cure to be near at hand and definite.

One day the Doctor said to me that I could return to my family without apprehension. I asked that I might remain another month to make sure, and he granted my request, adding, however, that it was a useless precaution.

Finally I accepted my liberty and returned home. My wife and sister-in-law, my children and friends fêted my arrival. I avowed half the truth to them—told them I had gone to follow a treatment for an affection of the lungs, of which I had not spoken, fearing to alarm them, but that I was entirely convalescent. The fact was I never looked better in my life.

Hold! Where am I now? Barabi—bi—bu—ba—bibari—one, two, three—bibari! There is something the matter with my head.

* * * * *

Four months after I had resumed my place at the *table de famille*, my sister-in-law being seated at my left, I plunged a knife into her heart—then, raising frightful shrieks, I rolled upon the floor. The outburst endured—appeared to endure—five minutes or more, when I came to myself and began to weep.

I was arrested. No one except M. Laussedat was able to suspect the cause of my crime. Just at the moment of the catastrophe, for which I had carefully selected the hour, the Doctor was absent from Paris, so that the investigation followed its course.

To the question of the magistrate, I replied that I had acted without volition in the affair, under the impulse of a passion that I was not able to withstand. Naturally, it was responded that I simulated insanity. Then, as though yielding to shame, I spoke of M. Laussedat. He was hurriedly summoned.

With a loyalty that I had well counted on, he told all that had passed. He spoke of my frankness, of which I had given so many proofs, of the superhuman efforts that I had made to control the fatal malady, and of my voluntary sojourn at the *maison de santé*.

Homicidal monomania was only too evident. The great *aliénists*, Esquiros and Penel, had reported some observations identified with my case. (I knew it well, because it was upon these observations that I had constructed my plan.)

When the trial came on I was unanimously acquitted, only the Tribunal decided that, by way of precaution, I should be confined in a *maison de santé* during a period of whose duration the *médecins aliénists* should be the judges.

In the meantime, my wife had inherited from her sister. The million was ours, and no one dreamed how it was done!

M. Laussedat had declared to the Tribunal that, according to all appearances, the explosion of this crisis did not preclude a final cure, and I was shut up in a mad house.

Here I am—I laugh—they have kept me here nearly a year. A year for five hundred thousand francs? That is not much. Barabi—what signifies—bibari—bu—how I fooled them all. Hi! hi! hi biba—bara—I am thirsty—Hum! hum!—a frog!—the Doctor swallowed my story easily, didn't he?—barabi—Acknowledge that it was well conceived. Hé! hé! hé! bibi—babi—I fooled them with my pretended lunacy—courage—biba—is necessary—ribiba. Suppose the lunacy should—ribari—bib—what's that?—a dragon! a coiling cobra about to strike! Help! help! I'm mad! I'M MAD!

HONOR LUCELLE.

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LEGENDS OF WOLFVILLE.

BY "DAN QUINN."

Wolfville is a Cattleman's Settlement in Arizona, and the Characters in these Legends are Cowboys.

No. II.—The Cactus.

"THE CACTUS" was the name bestowed upon her in Wolfville. Her signature, if she had written it, would probably have been Mollie Prescott, at least such was the declaration of Rosewood Jim.

"I sees this yere female a year ago in Tombstone," asserted that veracious chronicler, "where she cooks at the stage station, an' she gives it out cold she's called Prescott—Mollie Prescott—an' most likely she knows her name, an' knowed it a year ago."

As Rosewood was a historian of known petulance, no one cared to challenge either his facts or his conclusions; so the real name of "The Cactus" was accepted by the Wolfville public as Prescott.

"The Cactus" was a personable lady, comely and round, and her advent into Wolfville society had caused something of a flutter. Her mission was to cook, and in the fulfilment of her destiny she presided over the range at the O.K. Hotel. Being publicly hailed as "The Cactus" seemed in nowise to depress her, and it is possible she even felt a secret glow over an epithet which was meant by the critical taste that awarded it to illustrate those thorns in her nature which repelled and held in check the amorous male of Wolfville.

Women were jewellery in Wolfville, and on her first coming "The Cactus" had many admirers. Every man in the camp loved her the moment she stepped from the Tucson stage six months before. From the term "every man," however, a careful writer would except Rosewood Jim. That obdurate scientist, given as he was to the investigation of the inner workings of faro as a philosophy, had no time for such a soft and dulcet affair as love. Another thing, Rosewood had scruples of honour born of his business.

"Life behind a deal-box is a mighty sight too fantastic," quoth the thoughtful Rosewood, "for a family. It does well enough for single-footers, which it don't make much difference with when a player pulls his six-shooter an' sends 'em shoutin' home to heaven some abrupt. But there ain't no room for a woman with a man who turns cards as a pursoot. Priests and gamblers ain't got no business with squaws."

As time went on, the scores of lovers who sighed on the daily trail of "The Cactus" dwindled down to two. The rest gave out dispirited.

"I'm clean strain enough," said Bill Tutt, in apologetic description of his failure to persevere, "but I knows when I've got through. I'll play a game to a finish, but when it's down to the turn, an' my last chip's gone over to the dealer, why I shoves my chair back an' quits. An' it's about that a-way of an' concernin' my love for this yere Cactus girl. I jest can't get her none, an' that settles it. I now drors out an' gives my seat to someone else."

"That's whatever," said a personage known as Texas Joe, who was an interested listener to the defeated Mr. Tutt, "an' you can gamble I'm with you on them views. I loves 'The Cactus' myself to a frightful degree, an' thar's times I jest goes about whinin' for her; but yere awhile back I comes projectin' around her kitchen, an' 'bing!' comes a skillet at my head, an' that lets me out. You bet I don't pursoo them explorations round her no more. I don't want to get my rope on to no woman who is that callous as to heave kitchen *bric-à-brac* at a heart that's pantin' for her."

Two lovers still knelt at the shrine of "The Cactus." These were hailed by the men of Wolfville respectively as Rice Brown and Riley Brooks. A description of one would have been a portrait of the other. They were young, good-looking, of the breezy south-western type; tanned as to face, and lithe and limber as black snakes as to person. These still held the affections of "The Cactus" in siege and demanded capitulation, without, however, making much apparent impression.

Still it was possible that "The Cactus" was a shade less thorny in her treatment of Rice Brown and Riley Brooks than of any of the others. Perhaps she was becoming tired out. Be the reason what it may, these two persisted when the others failed, and at last were recognised as rivals.

"All I'm afraid of," said old man Armstrong, the head of the local vigilance committee, "is that these yere young bucks 'll take to pawin' 'round for trouble with each other. As the upshot of sech doin's would most likely be the stringin' of the survivor by the Wolfville committee on lariats, these yere nuptials, which now looks some feasible, would be clean busted an' the camp get a set-back jest that much. I wish this yere maiden would tip her hand in this to some discreet gent, so a play could be made in advance to get the wrong man outen the way. Whatever do you think you'se'f, Rosewood?"

"It's a delicate deal," said that sapient cardist, "to go tamperin' round a young female for the secrets of her soul, but I shorely deems it a crisis an' public interest demands somethin' is done. These yere boys is growing mighty hostile of each other, which I notes last night over in the Gold Mine Saloon, where they was paintin' up for war, an' onless we all interferes yere, it's my jedgment some of this yere love-makin' 'll come off in the smoke."

"Thar oughter be a nact of Congress," said Tutt the pessimist, "agin love-makin' in the Far West, an'

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the East should be kept for sech purposes speshul, same as reservations for Injuns. The Western climate's too exyooberant for love-makin'."

"S'pose me an' you an' Tutt yere goes over to this young female, an' all polite an' congenial like, we ups an asks her intentions?" continued Armstrong, in an interrogative way, to Rosewood.

"Excuse me, pards," says Tutt, with sad earnestness, "but I don't think I wants cards in this at all. 'The Cactus' is a mighty spirited lady, an' you all recalls as how I've been pesterin' some 'round her in the past myself, for which reason, with others, she might take my comin' on sech errants derisive an' bang me over the fore'erd with a dipper or some sech objectionable play. So I reckon I better keep out of this yere embassy a whole lot. I ain't aimin' to shirk nuthin', but it'll be a heap more shore to win if I do."

"Tutt ain't onlikely to be plenty right about this," said Rosewood, "an' I reckon, Armstrong, we all better take this trick ourselves."

The mission was not a success. When the worthy pair of peace preservers appeared in the presence of "The Cactus" and made the inquiries noted, it excited the scorn and ire of that retiring damsel beyond the power of words to describe.

"What be you all doin' in my kitchen?" she asked, her young face flushed with rage and noonday cooking. "Who sent you all canterin' over yere to me with these insultin' questions, anyhow? I demand to know at ter once."

"And yere," said Rosewood, in relating the exploit in the Gold Mine Saloon immediately afterwards, "she stamps her foot like a buck antepole, an' lets fly a stove-griddle at us, an' all with a proud, high air, which reminds me a mighty sight of a goddess."

At the time it would seem the two attempted an apologetic explanation of their presence, and made efforts to point out to "The Cactus" the crying public need of some decision on her part.

"You don't want these two young male persons to take to shootin' of each other all up none, do you?" said Armstrong.

"I want you two men to get outen my kitchen," replied "The Cactus" vigorously, "an' I wants you to move some hurried, too. Don't never let me find your mocassin tracks 'round this yere water-hole no more, or I'll turn in an' mark you up a whole lot."

"Yere, you," she continued, as they were about to leave, something cast down by the conference, "you all can tell that Riley Brooks an' Rice Brown if they're blamed fools enough to go makin' a gun play over me, to make it and make it hard. Tell 'em I can pick my man out when the smoke blows away."

"Tutt's way right about 'The Cactus' bein' some spirited," said Armstrong, as the two walked away.

"She's shore spirited, an' that's a fact," mused Rosewood, in assent.

The result of the talk with "The Cactus" found its way about in Wolfville, and in less than an hour bore its hateful fruit.

The peaceful quiet of the Gold Mine Saloon, which, as a rule, heard no harsher note than the clatter of a stack of chips, was suddenly broken.

"You all who ain't interested yere better take to a lower limb."

It was the voice of Riley Brooks. The trained instinct of the Wolfville public at once fathomed the trouble, and proceeded to hide its many heads behind barrels, tables, counter, and any place which promised refuge from the bullets. All but one, and that one was Rice Brown.

He knew it meant him the moment Riley Brooks uttered the first syllable, and his pistol came to the front with a brevity born of long practice. His rival's was already there, and so the shooting began. As result, Mr. Brooks received a serious injury, which crippled his good right arm for many a day, while Mr. Brown was picked up with a wound in the side which even the sentiment of Wolfville, inured to such things and inclined to optimism at all times, admitted as dangerous.

"Well," said Armstrong, after the duellists had been cared for at the O.K. House, "yere we be again an' nuthin' settled. Yere we has all this shootin' an' all this blood-lettin', an' the camp gets all torn up; an' still thar's jest as many of these yere people now as there was before, an' most likely the whole deal to go over again."

"I shorely abominates things a-splittin' even this away," said Rosewood, "but Wolfville must b'ar its burdens same as other camps. It can't be he'ped none."

The next day the two duellists were still in bed. A new phase was given the affair when "The Cactus," clothed in purple and fine linen, and with two red roses in her straw hat, took the stage for Tucson. The management of the O K. House reported, in deference to the excited state of the Wolfville mind, that "The Cactus" would return in a week.

"Goin' for her wedding troosoe, most likely," said Armstrong, as he gazed after the stage.

"Let's drink to the hope she gets a red dress," said Tutt. "Set out all your bottles, barkeeper, an' don't leave nary man out. You bet red is my favourite colour."

No one seemed to know the intentions of "The Cactus." The shooting had in no wise disturbed her. That may have been her obdurate heart or it may have come from a familiarity with the evanescent tenure of human life born of long years on the border. Be that as it may, she experienced not the least concern touching the condition of her brace of lovers upstairs, and took the stage without even saying good-bye to them or anyone else.

"An' some fools say women is talkers," said Rosewood in high disgust.

Three days later Old Scotty, the stage driver, came in with startling news. "The Cactus" had married a man in Tucson, and would bring him to Wolfville in a week.

"When I first hears of it," said Old Scotty, with a groan, "an' when I thinks of them two pore boys a-layin' in Wolfville, an' their rights being trifled with that a-way I shorely thinks I'll take my Winchester an' go an' stop them rites a whole lot; but, pards, the Tucson marshal wouldn' have it. So she nails him, an' I hears in a saloon over thar she's been aimin' to marry him before she ever hops into Wolfville at all. I sees him afterwards, an' he's a little, measly-lookin' prairie dog, an' from his looks he couldn't get a job clerkin' in a store."

"Thar you be," said Armstrong. "Another case of woman's inhumanity to man. However, if 'The Cactus' has done gone a-fluttin' from her perch in this yere fashion, just the same we must prance 'round an' give her a high old time on her return. The honour of the camp bein' concerned, of course we whoops it up in style."

And they did.

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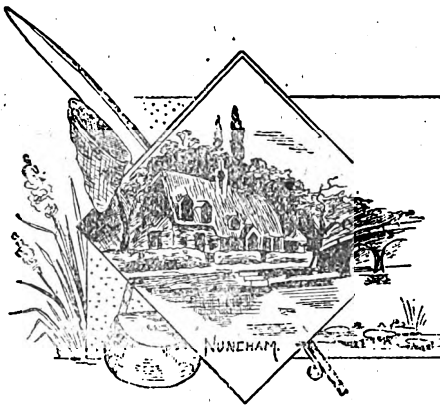

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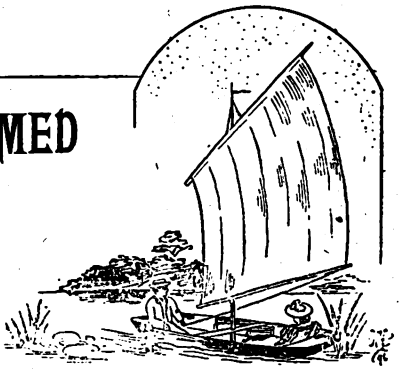

The story I shall tell you was told me by an Italian lady. She had been showing me the work of her father, who must have been a sculptor of ability, her mother's head, which was lovely; her own, as a child; a Cupid, a Venus, and the sculptor's own bust.

"My father was murdered, you know," the lady said, when I asked her to tell me the history of that wonderful face. "He was a sculptor; his studio was a little building apart from the house, with a light properly arranged, and encircled by foliage. He often was quite alone there late at night. No one ever dreamed of danger.

"My father lay on the floor, foully murdered."

"One night he arose from his bed, told my mother he had dreamt of a face which he wished to reproduce, and went to his studio. My mother fell asleep. She woke in the grey dawn. My father was not yet in the house.

"Dressing herself, she ran to the lonely building among the trees. My father lay upon the floor, foully murdered. She did not survive the shock.

"The motive was evidently robbery. His watch and two diamond rings were gone.

"Italian girls marry early. Though my mother was but thirty, I was fifteen, and a woman at heart. I vowed to revenge my father. I, who was now rich, resolved to spend all my fortune, if necessary, in bringing to justice the murderer of both my parents. "'Vendetta,' I cried; 'afterwards grief, but first his punishment.' I had but one clue. Upon a piece of clay that had fallen to the ground remained the impress of a man's bare foot — a strangely deformed foot. All the toes between the great and the little ones were gone.

"The police knew no such foot among the criminal class: but I kept the mould and its cast carefully.

"Under a pretence of befriending the poor, I went into many a dwelling where I knew there was more sin than suffering, always with my old nurse, a venerable woman of great good sense.

"I practised my father's art, and also painted, that I might be able to beg suspicious-looking people to pose for my figures.

"My reputation for benevolence drew about me the riff-raff of Naples. I was known to be young, and was supposed to be foolishly generous. Still I found no one with such a deformed foot as the cast exhibited.

"My aunt lived in the house with me. She was a woman of middle-age, and a great matchmaker.

"One day she proposed an alliance to me. A nobleman from France had offered himself—a marquis, very, very rich. I declared I had no thought but for my lost parents; but she insisted that I should at least know the gentleman.

"At last I promised this.

"He came splendidly attired, courteous to the point of flattery. He spoke of great people he had known; of the Empress, then in her prime, who spoke to him as 'My dear Friend.' He showed us orders, tokens of esteem from people known all over the world, but I did not believe in him.

"He struck me as an imposter—a man who would not hesitate at crime; and as I noticed a curious awkwardness—not quite a lameness—in his gait, the one object of my life—my monomania, if you will choose to call it so—arose before me.

"'Pardon me,' he said as he trod on my aunt's train; 'I received a wound in battle which makes one of my feet trouble me somewhat sometimes. I nearly lost the favour of the Empress by the same accident. When I informed her of the cause of my awkwardness, she was gracious enough to reply: "One must pardon everything to a brave soldier."'

"'Bah!' I thought. 'You are telling falsehoods.' But my aunt loaded him with compliments until I was ashamed of her. She ended by asking him to sup with us I listened eagerly.

"'I hope you will come,' I added, with a smile. My aunt tapped me pleasantly on the shoulder with her fan.

"'It's not always that Irene seconds my invitation,' she said.

"'You are sensible, child,' she said, when he was gone.

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'The marquis is a great catch. Not very handsome, certainly, and has a little limp, but it is the defect of a hero—a soldier's wound. It is really quite a charm when one thinks of that.'

"I interrupted her by asking if we might have five o'clock tea before the supper.

"'I wish to fill this cup for the Marquis,' I said, 'It is such a pretty attention—one a lady may offer with grace.'

"'I never saw you so charming,' said my aunt. 'Tea, of course, if you like it.'

"After this I waited with impatience for the evening of the promised visit. If I were to tell you what thoughts filled my mind you would think me mad. I scarcely slept. I ate only enough to keep me alive. My aunt laughed at me and told me I was in love. Oh, little could she read my heart? I had never hated anything as I hated that man.

"At last the day came. Dressed in white, with roses in my belt and one great red one in my hair, I greeted the Marquis with a smile.

"My aunt was charming; he all adoration.

"Occasionally my old nurse appeared at the door. I made her a little sign, which she understood. 'Not yet,' it said to her. The tea was brought in. I filled the cups, and replenished the pot. The Marquis emptied his cup rapidly.

"'Tea becomes nectar, made by such hands,' he said.

"'Let me replenish your cup,' I cried.

"I lifted the boiling pot, crossed the room, smiled as he held up the cup, and then the pot slipped, and its contents were emptied over the foot of our guest.

"He uttered a yell of pain. I flung the pot away. It was of fine porcelain, and shattered into fragments on the polished floor, beyond the Persian rug. I sank on my knees at his feet, ignoring the low oath he had uttered.

"'I have scalded the Marquis,' I cried. 'Let me do my best to repair the injury.'

"I pulled off the delicate evening shoe. He was weak with pain, but he resisted. I removed his stocking, while he panted:

"'Arrest the murderer of my father!'"

"'I beg, signora, that you will not trouble yourself.'

"And I saw what I had expected. My nurse had rushed in. I made her a sign.

"'The time has come,' I said to her, in this mute fashion. Then the room was filled with police officers.

"'Arrest the murderer of my father!' I cried.

"My aunt shrieked, but these men care little for women's cries or men's imprecations. They led the Marquis away, well guarded.

"He proved to be a man who had escaped from one of the French prisons—a man of twenty murders. He had stolen his orders and his letters of introduction from a master he had also robbed of money and jewels.

"His maimed foot filled the mould in the clay exactly, and precisely resembled the cast. Moreover, my father's watch was found on his person. He was tried and found guilty. He made a full confession before his execution.

"'The big diamond on the gentleman's finger tempted me,' he said. 'I never could resist fine diamonds—never! Then he wrestled with me, and his death became necessary to insure my life.'

"It is years ago," said the Italian lady, "but I never shall forget my strange and terrible joy in my revenge.

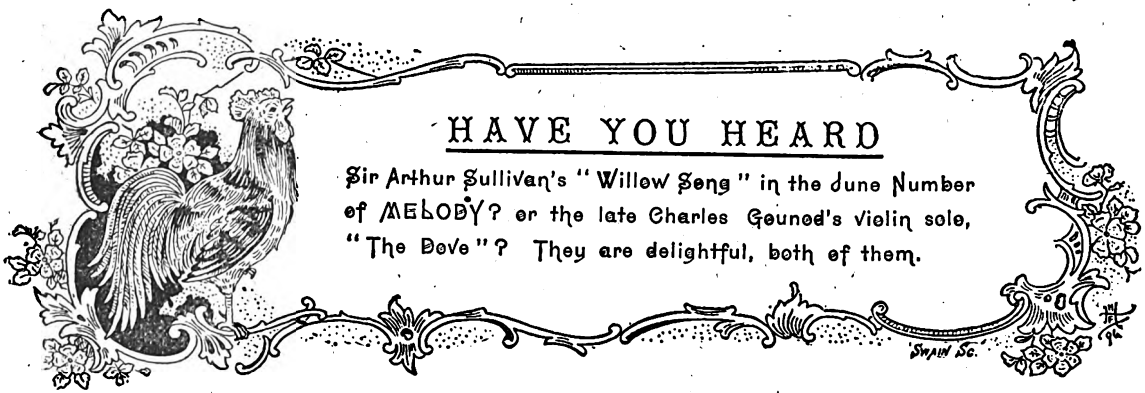
"The people cheered me in the streets. My story was told by the 'improvisatores,' and sung by the singers in the streets.

"It was a nine days' wonder. I wept, I laughed, I thanked Heaven.

"I was not seventeen but I had carried a vendetta to its bitter end.

"Since then," the signora said softly, "other things have come to me—love, a husband, children. I am more tender, perhaps not so determined, not so sure of my own instincts. Like all other people, I reason more, and have less faith in feeling. Still, I have never been sorry for what I did. I shall always feel that I was right in avenging my father's murder as though I had been a son."

MADGE MORRIS.



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CARELESS LOVE.

THAT Jack Morrow had the finest ranch in all Texas everybody in those parts, from Paint Rock to San Angelo, firmly believed. That Jack Morrow was a perfect "fury" when aroused, everybody also knew. He was tall, dark and twenty-eight, and he went to Austin and took to himself a wife. This was the cause of all his trouble, as it has been that of many other men.

Rose Shannon was as pretty as the flower she was named after, and had long been a belle of Austin. Why she had married the tall, dark English man, rich in horses and cattle, when he came courting, she could not tell; but marry him she did, and into the San Angelo country she went to keep his big house on the Couché River.

It was all novel for the city girl away up there in central Texas. The long rides across the flat prairie with the attentive but somewhat silent husband, the glories of the new big house, with its balconies and stately rooms; the grand piano in the parlour, the army of servants at beck and call; all these things were new to the young wife, and time passed pleasantly for a while. Then little by little the long flat prairie, gay with flowers, became more tiresome to her eyes; little by little the rides grew tiresome, too. She got angry with herself, the country, her husband, and everybody else.

But Jack Morrow hated the city, moreover it was a long distance from his home. He had the best in Texas and the prettiest wife. He frowned down all her petulant little hints for a visit back to Austin, and the little bride, who thought a while ago that she was happy, sulked and held a half wish in her heart for another fellow.

One day the other fellow came to San Rosa. He was third or fourth cousin to Jack's wife, and if she had chosen to write to him of late, it was all in the family, and Jack took no notice.

Dick Thorn was twenty-two; he was good looking, accomplished, and as thorough-paced a young scamp as ever played poker in Austin or took the place of better men in women's hearts in all Texas.

Under Dick's auspices life began anew at San Rosa ranch. He gathered the country side at balls at the big house, played sentimental songs on the guitar, and beat Jack Morrow himself at poker and at a horse race on the big track Jack had on the ranch.

Maybe Jack Morrow left them too much alone; maybe it was just the inward evil in a wife well loved and a friend too kindly treated.

Anyway, it started—just as many other things do that end seriously—in fun first, and then sped swiftly from jest to earnest.

Dick had been playing the courtly kinsman. It was "*Ma belle cousine*," and a stately kiss upon the finger-tips at first. Things do not generally stay where they are started. It was "dear coz" now, and the kiss had reached the lips. The serio-comic salute upon the hand had been given in Jack's presence. The present plan was, somehow, postponed until Jack was going out among his men and cattle. Not that there was any harm in it, oh, no!

About this time someone had written a song. It was a good song, too, and Dick sang it. Perhaps it was this song that was the cause of it all—who knows?

He was singing one moonlight night, seated at the piano, and the two were alone. Rose was standing beside him turning the music, not that it was necessary, however, because it wasn't the song Dick was singing, and, if it had been, Dick had a way of throwing in extemporaneous verses of his own that were neat in their way, but generally foreign to the text, and made the music turning rather unnecessary.

It was the new song Dick was singing, and singing as only he could sing. It was the wail of some lone maiden who had loved and lost, and Dick was throwing a tenderness into the strain hardly its own.

> Careless love, careless love,
> 'Tis careless love like thine,
> That has broken the heart of many a girl,
> And has broken this poor heart of mine.

The hand turning the music trembled. Dick looked up. There was no reason why Jack Morrow's wife should have tears in her eyes.

"Rose," he whispered, "do you mean it?"

"Oh, Dick, Dick, your love is careless love."

"Not for you, Rose. I loved you before this man you married—carried you away."

* * * * *

This was the beginning of days that better for all had they never been.

Dick seldom rode about with Jack from that day. The song of "Careless Love" he sang no more. And so the summer sped.

* * * * *

When Dick Thorn went back to Austin, Jack rode to San Angelo, the nearest station, with him, and bade him good-bye with a smile.

"Come again, old fellow," he said. "You don't know how gay you've made San Rosa. We'll miss you much, and the place will be dull without you."

This was a long speech for Jack, and Dick replied in kind, and muttered, "the fool," as he waved his hat to him farewell.

* * * * *

Austin is a long way from the San Angelo country, and the post comes but once a week to San Rosa ranch. Yet Dick Thorn wrote a letter every week, always to Mrs. Jack, who handed the letters to her husband. They were calm and cousinly letters, and Jack liked to read them.

There might have been two letters in each, and Jack saw but one that was intended for his eyes, or if this was not always so, it was once—but that comes later.

A man named Adams had a ranch up the Couché, near Big Springs. He had tried Texas and cattle raising, and he did not like it. He wrote to Jack, saying he would like to sell his cattle, and Jack thought it would be a good investment, so he decided to go to Big Springs and see Adams, a journey of two weeks.

It was about this time that Dick Thorn had assented to Jack's invitation in each letter that his wife wrote, to come again to San Rosa. "He'll stir things up, sweetheart," said Jack.

So Dick was coming, and Jack was afraid that if he went to Big Springs, Dick might come without his having the pleasure of meeting him himself at the

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station, and riding with him home. However, Dick's last letter said he would not come for three weeks, and Jack decided to go to Big Springs, and see Adams.

He was booted and spurred, waiting in the hall to kiss his wife good-bye before he set out, when he espied the end of a letter sticking out of a book on the hall table.

"It's Dick's letter," he thought. "I saw Rose reading it and put it in here when she saw me coming, and then she ran upstairs." And for something to do while waiting, he pulled it out to read it over again, especially that part that read about "that fine old fellow, Jack." However, this letter did not read that way:

DARLING ROSE,—You say "the fool" is going to Big Springs, Wednesday next. Well, I leave here for San Rosa, Friday, then, and we can have things all by ourselves until he gets back. It will be easy to explain to him why I came sooner than I said in that letter which I always inclose as a blind for "dear hubby." I'll have a surprise for you, a big one. Be sure to get him to go, so nothing will be awkward if he should be at the ranch when I turn up three weeks ahead of time. I miss you so much, but wait till we meet again and the happy days of last summer will be renewed. Your own true love, JACK.

If any man had struck Jack Morrow in the face, if any man had wantonly insulted him to the teeth with the foulest epithets that human tongue could form, such an expression of hate could never have come to Jack's face, as was brought there by these few marks of ink and paper.

He saw it all—many trifles that he had not noticed at the last visit of Dick Thorn came back with confirmation strong as proof of holy writ.

With a calmness that he wondered at himself, he smoothed the crumpled letter and placed it back in the book. Already the wild resolve to blot out with blood the stain upon his honour, flashed through his brain. He had been wronged most cruelly, his vengeance would be full and ample, and it lay in one word: "Death!" From that moment Jack Morrow was insane—insane, but with the madman's cunning that plans a purpose and carries it to the end.

He kissed his wife good-bye; he laughed as he did so, and he rode away, pale and haggard. Mrs. Jack noticed how aged and grim he looked, and even simpered at the thought that his long journey might be fatal to him, for did he not look ill? And if she was a widow, why Dick—but pshaw, there was no such good luck.

It was Dick, Dick all day. She even opened the piano that had been shut long. She thought of the night Dick had sat there while the glorious Texas moonlight streamed through the window.

Half unconscious of what she did, she played the song of that night:

Careless love, careless love,
'Tis a careless love like thine,
That has broken the heart of many a girl,
And has broken this poor heart of mine.

Why did she shiver? A false note, like the wail of a lost soul, shuddered through the room. It was dark there. She called loudly for a light, and when the old negro woman brought it, she laughed at herself and wondered why she had been afraid.

Sunday night at last; Dick was coming. Since Friday one of the negro boys had been at the station at San Angelo with saddle-horses.

There was to be a big frolic among the darkies at the quarters, half-way across the ranch, and all the house servants had been given permission to go. It was a little lonely she thought, with a grim little smile, of the husband far away on his weary ride to Adam's ranch.

At San Angelo Dick Thorn hurriedly gave directions for the sending of his traps on, when the afternoon train left him at the station.

On horseback then, and the swift ride to the ranch began. It would be after dark when the ranch would be reached. But there would be a moon, and Dick ran his hand over the guitar strapped to his saddle. This was the surprise he wrote to Rose about. He would send the boy away to the frolic—he knew all about it—and silently gliding up to the house, would serenade Rose like a troubadour of old, and, climbing up the balcony, claim his reward—a kiss. Rather a silly idea, but silly women like silly ways, and none knew this better than Dick Thorn.

At nine o'clock the moon hung like a burnished shield on the walls of heaven; its rays poured down in hazy lines as light clouds crossed its glory; and on and on Dick Thorn rode to San Rosa ranch while the same moon looked down on the just and unjust. Ten o'clock; San Rosa reached at last.

The boy turns the horses into the corral and scampers away across to the quarters, and Dick Thorn glides likes a shadow to the house; it is all dark. The moon, that throws its angles into black lines of shade, makes it seem a house of shadows, dark as death.

The guitar is unslung from the shoulder, the quick fingers touch the strings. Beneath her window the soft tinkle of its tuneful strains arises:

Far off, far off, the river creeps
The stars shine down above;
All nature still a silence keeps,
The night was made for love.

The soft breeze stirs the sleeping flowers,
That tremble with the dew;
They wake but in the sunny hours,
Love lives the whole night through.

The frost will chain the river's flow,
The flowers die at its breath;
Nor frost, nor snow stay love, I know,
For love lives on, past death.

Dick's voice broke with emotion at the last word, "death." But he laughed aloud as a rose fell from the balcony and struck his arm—a rose as white as snow! Dick picked it up and stuck it in his coat. One hand touched the balcony post, the other followed, and Dick climbed up to claim the kiss the rose invited.

He reached the top, and threw himself across the rail. His foot touched something soft; he looked down—it was a bunch of flowers in a dead woman's hand, and the dead woman was Rose Morrow.

Love was stronger than death, he had sung; his fear was stronger than his love. Yet despite this, and the loud beating of his heart, was the desire to fly with a cry from this thing of horror—a woman in white, cold and still, with that gash across the throat!

"Rose, Rose!" he cried. "Oh, God, who has done this thing?"

"I!" A dark form stood beside him. "You played well; your sentimental song was not inappropriate. But come, the lover with his lute seems frightened at the way his mistress greets him." Then in sudden fury: "I tell you she lay dead, even while your silly song floated up to where she and I, the false dead woman and the husband who killed her, awaited you. A rose fell from her hand as if she threw it and struck you as it fell. It makes a fair mark on your breast. Take that, you dog!" and Jack Morrow's knife clove the rose the dead had given and the false, frightened heart that beat beneath it.

T. S.

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RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM COMPETITION.

BELOW are published the solutions to the problems set in THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM in *Short Stories* dated May 16th. A large number of competitors succeeded in getting all but one or two correct, most of them stumbling over No. 14. The prizes have gone to Mr. George D. Taylor, 28, Ernest Street, Rhyl; and Mr. J. H Tripney, 50, Coniger Road, Fulham, S.W., Gold-plated pencil-cases have been sent as consolation prizes to the fifty competitors whose attempts the Editor considered sufficiently meritorious.

KEY No. 11.

(a) D—rain.
(b) R—ice.
(c) S—light.
(d) B—lock.
(e) D—rabble.
(f) T—hump (or B—low).

KEY No. 12.

S	**O**	N	G
J	**U**	G	S
M	O	**P**	E
W	A	S	**P**
[illegible]	A	**L**	E
M	**E**	N	D
T	A	U	L
[illegible]	**E**	U	D
[illegible]	A	**N**	E
G	U	S	**T**
[illegible]	N	**A**	T
P	**R**	A	Y
Y	O	K	E

KEY No. 13.

B in D
R oa R
A ri A
G li B

KEY No. 14.

Assuming that the Editor works 24 hours a day for 365 days in the year, that he takes as long to carry the odd ten copies as a full quire, and that leap years are taken into consideration, the answer is 60 years, 31 weeks, 5 days, 13 hours, 46 minutes.

KEY No. 15.

I deprecate and imprecate the folly
Of giving wedding presents all the while,
The plan has caused a settled melancholy
To brood where once there was a pleasing smile.

My friends, it seems, are always getting married,
Their weddings to my sovereigns few give wings.
My vacant purse too long the load has carried
Of buying for them pretty, useless things.

KEY No. 16.

M annerin G
I mped E
D id O
D isaste R
L o G
E ducat E
M enageri E
A dmira L
R abb I
C ame O
H amle T

KEY No. 17.

The word of which the letters may be transposed the greatest number of times on pages 511 and 512, is LIMES, on page 512, column 2, line 5.

LIMES.—Smile, miles, slime, misle, Selim.

Among the most popular words sent in by competitors were:

STOP.—Tops, pots, post, spot.
NAME.—Mean, mane, mena, Amen.
REINS.—Rinse, sirea, risen, resin.
RATES.—Aster, tares, tears, stare.

KEY No. 18.

Pencil-makers.

KEY No. 19.

The anagrams were not at all distinguished for their brilliancy. Among the best sent in were:

1. Grand! Do let men hear.
2. Rich Tom Holt eats fried lentils.
3. A two weeks' leave.
4. Serfs should hope.
5. Oh, vote for Hale.

KEY No. 20.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
D	E	V	O	N	S	H	I	R	E.

1. Done. 2. Shed. 3. Hire. 4. Shin. 5. Dove. 6. Shone. 7. Rode. 8. Render. 9. Hone. 10. Even.

PICTURE ✣ PUZZLE ✣ PRIZE.

No. 7.

£10 TO BE GIVEN AWAY.

On the opposite page is a puzzle picture composed of 88 squares. If these squares be rearranged in a certain order they will form a real picture.

We offer a prize of £10 for the correct solution. In order to give readers in all parts of the United Kingdom as equal a chance as possible, none of the solutions received will be opened until Thursday, June 4th, when all those received will be considered together. In the event of two or more correct solutions being included up to this time, the prize will either be given to the sender of the *neatest* one, or will be divided amongst the correct competitors at the discretion of the Editor. Consolation Prizes will also be awarded.

If no correct solution be received on or before Tuesday, June 9th, 1896, the Ten-Pound Prize will be given to the sender of the solution then to hand which is most nearly correct.

Pictures should be packed flat or folded, not rolled, and the outside wrapper must be marked "Puzzle Number 7."

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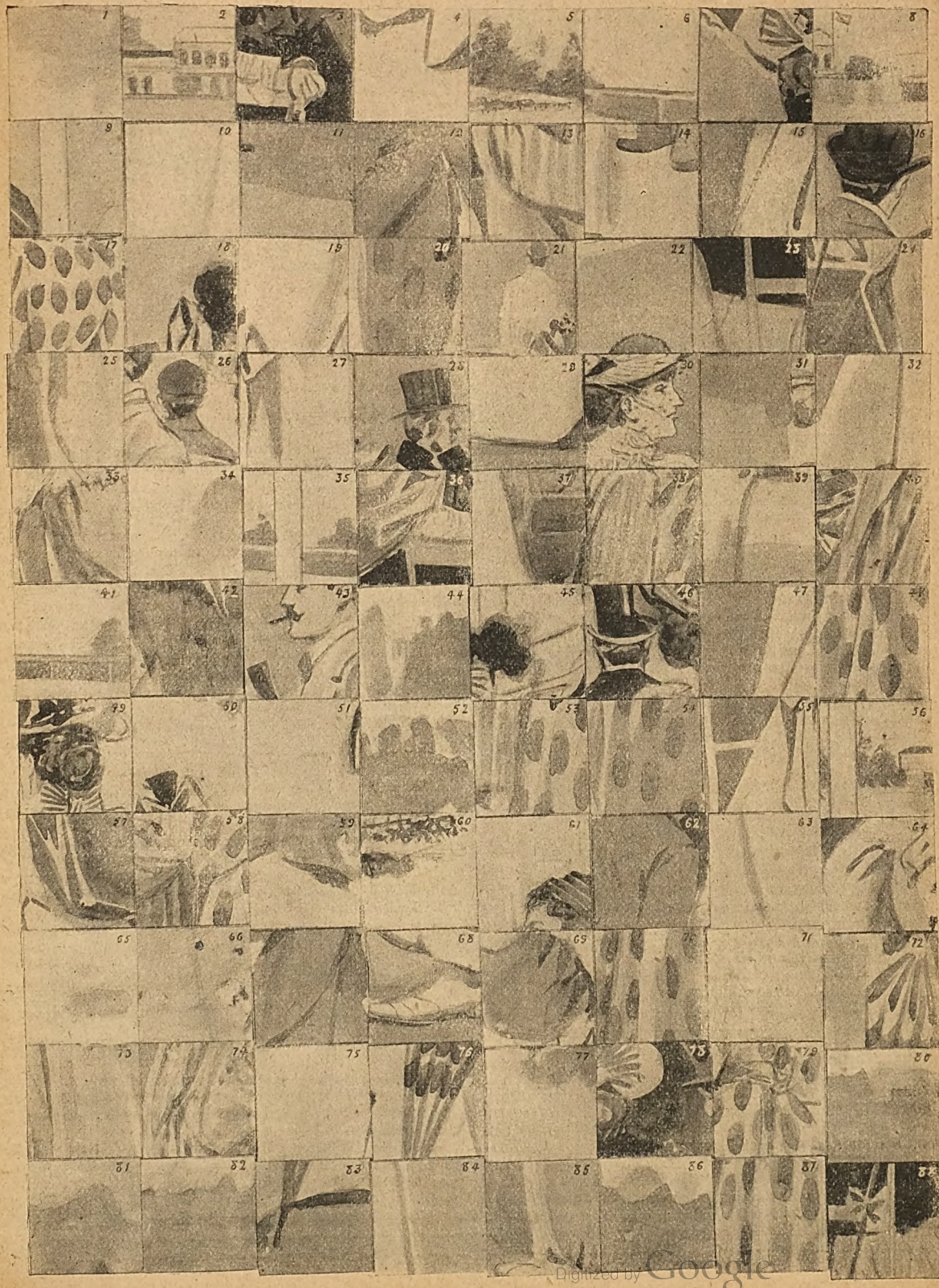

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AN INDIAN DRUG.

BY HUAN MEE,

Author of "The Czar's Diamond," "In Masquerade," "Alan Lindow's Wife," "Philip St. Voulle's Understudy," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

ESTLIN GODFRY brings from India three bottles of deadly poison, with which his friend, Walter Shenfield, a chemist, experiments on a rabbit. Estlin's uncle, Joseph Monro, is about to marry Ethel Sedwicke, and should he do so, Estlin will no longer come into the estate. On the wedding morning, Monro is found dead in his room. Estlin goes to London and consults an old friend, Sidney Larrance.

CHAPTER IV.

SUSPECTED.

SIDNEY LARRANCE puts himself to an enormous amount of trouble to secure a vacant carriage in the train, and then, locking the door with a railway key which he takes from his pocket, rolls himself up in his rug, and lighting a cigar, gazes reflectively out of the window, while Estlin Godfry waits with ill-concealed impatience for him to enlighten him as to his thoughts.

For ten minutes not a word is spoken, and then with a sigh Larrance turns towards his companion.

"It's no use," he says, "I must know more of the details. I cannot make head or tail of it; let us talk of something else."

To decide to talk of other things is simple, but to do so is impossible, and they drift back to the same channel again before they are aware of it.

At last Sidney Larrance leans forward, and placing his hand upon his companion's shoulder, gravely speaks.

"Estlin, I am about to say something to you which will be a greater blow than all that has gone before, bear it like a man and understand that whatever I do it is in your best interests, to prepare you for a blow which would come with devastating violence if you had no previous thought of it."

"Prepare me for a blow!" Estlin gasps; "something more terrible than what has occurred—I cannot understand you!"

"When a man dies suddenly, mysteriously, dies from poison, one has to consider why that poison was administered. Suicide, murder or misadventure."

"Yes—but——"

"Wait, look the matter fairly in the face with me. Suicide we may put out of the question. A man who has no insanity in his blood does not choose the morning of his wedding to commit self destruction, and even if he does he leaves some sign, perhaps a phial in which the poison has been, and, nine cases out of ten, some word to those he leaves behind."

"Well?" Estlin hoarsely ejaculates.

"We will not, then, consider suicide. Now murder, what of that? To explain a murder one must look to revenge or some other strong motive. Forgive the suggestion but perchance the lady who was to have married your uncle may be able to give a clue. Had she as far as you are aware any previous history, say an entanglement, which might indirectly have caused her to commit the deed, or influenced say a discarded lover to take so violent a step?"

"No, no, Larrance, you are no nearer the solution. They were devoted to each other. She has lived her whole life in this part of the country, and my uncle was the only man who had ever attracted her. I can swear to it on my life."

"Well, I accept the position. Dismiss her from the question. She has nothing to gain by your uncle's death and all to lose."

"She loses everything; his new will, of course, could not be signed until after the ceremony."

"Then the whole estate by the old will, which now holds good, will come to you?"

"It comes to me by law, but I know his wishes by the unsigned——"

"One moment. Now as far as you know, is there anyone who will benefit from the fact that this later will is so much waste paper?"

"Not a soul."

Sidney Larrance occupies a moment in lighting a fresh cigar, then suddenly, and speaking quickly, almost harshly, resumes the conversation.

"Think again, Estlin Godfry, think again. Look at the case not from the point of view of your own personality, look at it as an outsider will look at it who reads the evidence of to-morrow's inquest. Who is the gainer by your uncle's untimely death?"

For a moment Estlin Godfry returns the steady gaze of his friend with one of amazement, and then there spreads over his face a crimson flame, which, fading, leaves him haggard and deathly. He clutches the side of his seat and tries to rise, and the arm of his companion is around his shoulders, as with the other hand he forces the cup of a drinking flask between his teeth.

"Drink it, man, drink it; thank heaven *that* part of my duty is over."

"But you, Larrance, you, surely do not imagine——"

"Of course I do not, and that is what made it so difficult for me to force you to see it in the light that all the world will to-morrow."

Estlin Godfrey stares blankly out of the window in utter bewilderment, and Larrance continues deliberately to put the whole crushing truth before him. Better, he feels, to hammer everything well home now, than to let him torture himself to madness as his own mind suggests the damning facts heaped up against him.

"By your uncle's first and now legal will you are his heir

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at law," he continues. "Had he married, and then died, the old will would have become void by the English law, and his wife would have taken her proportion of the estate. Had he married, signed the new will and then died, the old will would of course, have become void, and——"

"I know, I know."

"Therefore you, Estlin Godfry, are his legal heir."

"Go on, go on; torture me to madness."

Sidney Larrance hesitates for a moment, bites his lip, and then gives the screw its final turn, "and you, Estlin Godfry, are therefore the only man who gains a single atom from his death."

"Then you assume that I murdered him," Godfry yells. "I did well to consult you. Curse you with your deliberate piling up of hypotheses. I would not trust a cur to your mercy," he breaks off with a hysterical laugh and then continues: "You have tried me in your egotistical judgment, Sidney Larrance, it only remains for you to don the black cap and sentence the unhappy prisoner to be hanged."

"It only remains for you to leave off being a fool, and listen to common sense," Larrance soothingly replies. "In discussing the second theory I have simply put before you the true position which you will occupy in the minds of the public to-morrow. If this blow had come in the open court, would it not have been a thousand times worse than from the lips of a man, a friend, who will not even break the thread of his learned discourse to trouble to tell you, what you know so well yourself, that you had nothing on earth to do with your uncle's death?"

"Therefore you, Estlin Godfry, are his legal heir."

Mr. Sidney Larrance's discourse does not however proceed smoothly, for, for a moment or two, there are earnest handshakes and profusions of apologies from his companion before he can recommence.

"To resume," he says at last, "we must look for the motive. We are satisfied that he did not commit suicide, we feel equally satisfied that he was not murdered—and yet perchance he had an enemy of whom you knew nothing, who chose the ripest moment for the deed. I must see everyone who can give me the least information. My intuition is at fault, let me endeavour to use the brains a prodigal Providence has bestowed upon me. I must see the lady who was to have been your uncle's wife."

"You cannot suspect——"

"Suspect no, but I certainly have an idea——"

What Sidney Larrance's idea was Estlin never knew; the train drew up with a jerk, the current of his thoughts was disturbed and together they alighted and walked along the deserted road into the town.

Estlin Godfry leaves Larrance that night deeply impressed by the seriousness of the position in which he is placed, but comforted by the thought that he has at least one man upon his side who will move heaven and earth to clear away the gloom that enshrouds him.

Suddenly there dawns upon him the remembrance of his actions on the very day before his uncle met his death. That Indian poison! Could it be possible in any way that his uncle had tasted the deadly drug from those curiously ornamented bottles—but no, it was absurd. Shenfield had them. He had two bottles, and the contents of the other one had been spilt. No, it was impossible that anyone could have touched it. Yet his uncle had died so suddenly, had been poisoned, and he, it would be known to-morrow, he had brought poison home with him from India. A fatal drug, instantaneous in its effects.

A cold sweat breaks out upon his brow as he realises that deadly circumstantial evidence is piling up against him, sufficient to brand him the blackest scoundrel, the most ungrateful villain that had ever trod the earth. So he passes the night, walking again and again the floor of his room, and ever searching for the key to the impenetrable mystery.

Sidney Larrance utilises the early morning of the day of the inquest in taking the first steps towards his inquiry. A glance at the windows of the study of the deceased man is sufficient to prove that access from without is impossible; a few words with one of the townsmen, staring open-mouthed at the house, places beyond all doubt the fact that the servants themselves are absolutely beyond suspicion. All natives of the town, they were too well satisfied with their easy position in a bachelor's household to wish for any change; and then he strolls through the town towards the house of the lady who was to have been the bride of him who is dead. He cannot settle for himself whether he ought not to risk everything and make an effort to see her and discover what light she can throw upon the mystery. He halts beside the house. Early though it is, a doctor's carriage is before the door, and a servant is standing by the gate.

"She hasn't been conscious for an hour together since that day," he hears the girl say. "Oh, what a horrible fate!"

What need to follow up such a clue. He turns reflectively

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"She hasn't been conscious for an hour together."

away; his intuition is blind to lead him towards a key to the mystery, but not so dead as not to assure him that nothing in the shape of light can be thrown upon the subject by the woman, who has lost all by the crime, and now lingers between life and death. He walks towards the Court where the inquiry is to be held and joins the crowd already assembled and discussing with extreme excitement and appreciation the latest horror. It is as he, admirable student of human nature, had imagined. Estlin Godfry is already tried, sentenced, and condemned in the impartial court of public opinion.

Of course he did it. It was obvious. If his uncle had married he would have lost all. He was a scoundrel with a fair face and dandified air, but a scoundrel all the same. But of course *they* all knew about it. One law for the rich and another for the poor. He'd get off right enough. What was that story a year or two ago, when Estlin Godfry was sent to India? Ah, that was a strange affair. Some theatrical girl. Oh! it was a bad business.

And so they gossip and gloat over the coming feast till the doors are thrown open, and they madly rush and fight for a seat to get a fair view of this latest free show in Maythorn.

CHAPTER V.

The Inquest.

At ten a.m. Mr. Coroner Rogers opened the inquest upon the body of Joseph Monro of Merton House, Maythorn. In addressing the jury he said:

"Gentlemen, you are already aware of the sad circumstance which has necessitated summoning you together today to inquire into the cause of the death of our well-known and respected townsman, Mr. Joseph Monro, of Merton House.

"The unfortunate event occurred under the most distressing circumstances, which were rendered all the more painful from the day being the occasion fixed for the wedding of Mr. Monro with Miss Ethel Sedwicke, to whom, I am sure, the jury will join with me in respectfully conveying our sincere and heartfelt sympathy in her bereavement. The circumstances of the death of Mr. Monro appear to be shrouded in dense mystery, and it will be your duty, gentlemen, by an impartial review of the evidence to be laid before you to decide whether the sad event is to be attributed to the hand of the deceased himself, or whether there is anyone who could from revenge or other motive have had any design upon his life.

"It seems beyond reason to suppose that Mr. Monro could have had any cause to take his own life. He was in a position that gave him no financial anxiety, his health was excellent, and he was not known to have a single enemy. Less than an hour after the time of the sad occurrence he was to have been married, amid the congratulations of his friends, to an amiable and accomplished lady. Gentlemen, with almost the sound of the joy bells ringing in his ears, with the acclamations of his friends showering upon him, the hand of death closed down, and those who were bidden guests to a festival came only to a house of mourning and of grief.

"It will be your duty to sift every possible atom of evidence to the bottom, and not to overlook any shred that may tend to throw light upon this terrible mystery. Whatever conclusion, gentlemen, a calm and careful revision of the whole of the evidence laid before you may result in, it will be for you to declare your verdict accordingly, whether it be one of suicide, or death by misadventure, or whether it be one of wilful murder."

The address of the Coroner was listened to in breathless and sympathetic silence by the crowded court, and then the first witness, Dr. Hill, was called.

The Coroner: "Will you tell the jury, Doctor Hill, the condition in which you found the deceased?"

Dr. Hill: "As an old friend of Mr. Monro's I was invited to be best man at his wedding, and on arriving at the house an hour before the time fixed for the ceremony, was asked by Mr. Monro if I would, later in the day, together with Mr. Grindley, witness the will that he had drawn up for his signature. I consented. While we were awaiting the carriages Mr. Monro retired to his study, having requested his nephew, Mr. Estlin Godfry, to follow him. In a short time Mr. Godfry returned to us, stating that Mr. Monro was busy writing a couple of letters that he had forgotten, and that if we would go to his room in five minutes he would like to take a glass of wine with us before starting. Mr. Grindley and I proceeded to the study a few minutes after, and found Mr. Monro sitting at his writing-table with his head resting upon his hand. I thought at first that he had fallen asleep or had fainted. I tried his pulse, but it showed no sign of life, and upon raising him, he fell back inert. I loosened his collar and tie, and applied my stethoscope to his heart, but there was no pulsation. He was stone dead."

The Coroner: "Did you apply restoratives?"

Dr. Hill: "Yes, I used every endeavour to restore animation although from the first I perceived it was useless."

The Coroner: "You have held a post-mortem examination?"

Dr. Hill: "Yes, I discovered that the death was due to poison, the whole of the organs of the body were in a normal state, and the heart and lungs were perfectly healthy."

The Coroner: "Were you able to discover the poison that had been used?"

Dr. Hill: "No, sir; it must have been a very powerful poison, but I cannot tell what. I should say that death had been instantaneous and painless."

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A Juryman: "Did you notice any glass or bottle which could have contained the poison?"

Dr. Hill: "No, there was nothing upon the study table beyond a decanter of sherry—which I have analysed and found perfectly free from any poison—several empty wine glasses, and the two letters written and ready for the post, which he had intimated to Mr. Godfry he intended writing. The open will awaiting signature was also there."

The Coroner: "Could the poison have been taken in the form of a capsule?"

Dr. Hill: "I should think not, as there was nothing poisonous found in the stomach; it appeared to have been a poison that paralysed the whole system the instant it touched the tongue."

The Coroner: "You have never known a similar case in your experience?"

Dr. Hill: "No, sir."

The Coroner: "Or read of any such?"

Dr. Hill: "Not in England."

The Coroner: "Elsewhere?"

Dr. Hill: "I have read stories of Eastern poisons having these deadly effects, but they are unknown to us."

A Juryman: "You are quite certain that the condition of things you discovered could only have been brought about by some such poison?"

Dr. Hill: "Quite."

The Coroner: "There were no indications of heart disease or paralysis, nothing to cause death except the drug?"

Dr. Hill: "Nothing."

Mr. Grindley corroborated the evidence of Dr. Hill as to the condition in which Mr. Monro was found. There was no reason for Mr. Monro to take his own life that he was aware of. He had enjoyed the confidence of Mr. Monro and his personal friendship. He had acted as solicitor for him for twenty years. There were no financial embarrassments whatever in the deceased gentleman's affairs. He drew up the will that was lying upon the table in the study. That will left an annuity of £1,000 a year to Mr. Estlin Godfry, and the remainder of the property was exclusively and without restriction left to Mrs. Monro.

The letters found upon the table were then opened by the Coroner and read, but threw no further light upon the case, the one having relation only to some jewellery he wished forwarded to Windermere, where the honeymoon was to be spent, to arrive on the 30th August, Mrs. Monro's birthday, and the other to a personal friend absent in Scotland, thanking him for a congratulatory letter received that morning.

Estlin Godfry was then called and examined.

The Coroner: "You were the last person to see your uncle alive?"

Estlin: "Yes, I saw him not more than five minutes before he was found dead, when I went to his study at his own request."

The Coroner: "For what object?"

Estlin: "He desired to discuss some private financial matters with me."

The Coroner: "In regard to what?"

Estlin: "Chiefly in regard to his will. He told me that by the will, a copy of which was lying upon the table, he had left me the sum of £1,000 a year and that the rest of his property went absolutely to his wife."

The Coroner: "He didn't seem to you to be unwell, or suffering from any depression of spirits?"

Estlin: "No, never seemed better in his life."

The Coroner: "He didn't give you the impression of a man likely to take his own life?"

Estlin: "Certainly not."

The Coroner: "You were, I believe, on the best of terms with your uncle; your relations were cordial and friendly?"

Estlin: "Yes, sir."

The Coroner: "This proposed wedding had not proved a cause of estrangement?"

Estlin: "No, sir, my uncle had informed me that it would make no difference in the household and that I should be regarded as I had always been—his adopted son."

The Coroner: "Are you aware whether your uncle had any poison in his possession?"

Estlin: "I don't know."

The Coroner: "Was he a good sleeper?"

Estlin: "Fairly."

The Coroner: "Was he troubled with insomnia?"

Estlin: "Very occasionally, once or twice lately, he had not slept as well as usual, and in the course of conversation asked me if I knew of any harmless drug that would induce sleep."

The Coroner: "Did you recommend him anything?"

Estlin: "No, sir."

A Juryman: "Why should he ask you instead of his medical attendant?"

Estlin: "Perhaps because he thought I might have heard of something in my travels."

The Coroner: "You have travelled a great deal?"

Estlin: "I have been in India nearly two years."

The Coroner: "Have you any acquaintance with Indian drugs?"

Estlin: "Very little; I believe they have curious properties, but I have never tried them."

The Coroner: "Did you bring any specimens to England that your uncle by chance might have got possession of, and taken either accidentally or with intent?"

Estlin: "I did bring home some drugs, but my uncle could not have got possession of them."

The Coroner: "Why?"

Estlin: "Because the night before I took them away from the house."

The Coroner: "Why?"

Estlin: "To show to a friend."

The Coroner: "A scientific friend?"

Estlin: "Yes."

The Coroner: "Will you be good enough to tell the jury his name?"

Estlin: "It was Walter Shenfield."

The Coroner: "Thank you, that will do. Call Walter Shenfield."

The Coroner: "Well, Mr. Shenfield, you have generally supplied the late Mr. Monro with whatever drugs or toilet requisites he has used?"

Walter Shenfield: "Yes, sir."

The Coroner: "Have you sold him any poisons?"

Walter Shenfield: "Never to my recollection."

The Coroner: "If you had done so, you would have entered the record of the sale in your 'poisons book'?"

Walter Shenfield: "Undoubtedly, sir."

The Coroner: "You have that book here?"

Walter Shenfield: "Yes, sir."

The Coroner: "Is there any entry of ever having supplied Mr. Monro with poisons?"

The witness turned over the few written pages of the book—there were not many entries—and then replied in the negative.

The Coroner: "You know something of poisons and their action, of course?"

Walter Shenfield: "Yes, sir, I have made a special study of the matter."

The Coroner: "Why?"

Walter Shenfield: "Merely a hobby. It interests me."

The Coroner: "Indeed. You have heard no doubt the manner in which the deceased gentlemen was found. Have you ever had any experience of a similar case?"

Walter Shenfield: "No, sir."

The Coroner: "Estlin Godfry told us in his evidence just now, that the evening before the day fixed for the wedding of the deceased, he brought down to you several bottles of drugs."

Walter Shenfield: "Yes."

The Coroner: "Why did he do so?"

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Walter Shenfield: "I do not know."
The Coroner: "Did he mention the nature and property of the drugs?"
Walter Shenfield: "He said he had been told they were deadly."
The Coroner: "How many bottles did he bring?"
Walter Shenfield: "Three."
The Coroner: "You have them still?"
Walter Shenfield: "Yes—that is, two of them."
The Coroner: "Two, what became of the third?"
Walter Shenfield: "It was opened by myself, and the contents accidentally spilled."
The Coroner: "Why did you open it?"
Walter Shenfield: "To test it."
The Coroner: "How?"
Walter Shenfield: "By giving an infinitesimal dose to a rabbit."
The Coroner: "Who suggested this?"
Walter Shenfield: "Mr. Godfry."
The Coroner: "What was the result?"
Walter Shenfield: "The animal died instantly." (Sensation in Court.)
The Coroner: "How was the poison spilled?"
Walter Shenfield: "In its dying convulsion the animal knocked the bottle over."
The Coroner: "Where was this?"
Walter Shenfield: "In my shop, on the counter."
The Coroner: "When?"
Walter Shenfield: "Tuesday night last."
The Coroner: "What was the time?"
Walter Shenfield: "Ten minutes to ten."

"The animal died instantly."

The Coroner: "Had you closed your shop?"
Walter Shenfield: "Yes."
The Coroner: "Your usual closing time is ten, is it not?"
Walter Shenfield: "Yes."
The Coroner: "You closed earlier than usual that night?"
Walter Shenfield: "Yes, ten minutes."
The Coroner: "Why?"
Walter Shenfield: "Because business was quiet, and I wanted a chat with Mr. Godfry, who suggested I might as well shut the shop."
The Coroner: "You have known Mr. Godfry a long time?"
Walter Shenfield: "Yes, many years."
The Coroner: "What became of the bottle that was upset?"
Walter Shenfield: "I destroyed it together with the paper with which I soaked up the spilt fluid."
The Coroner: "Had the bottle been opened before?"
Walter Shenfield: "No, sir."
The Coroner: "You are sure of that?"
Walter Shenfield: "Absolutely."
A Juryman: "How do you know?"
Walter Shenfield: "Because the skin covering the cork was intact, and the bottle was full."
The Coroner: "You have the other two bottles?"
Walter Shenfield: "Yes, safe under lock and key."
The Coroner: "Can you swear that Mr. Godfry only brought those three bottles home from India?"
Walter Shenfield: "No."
The Coroner: "Can you prove that he had no more?"
Walter Shenfield: "No, sir."
The Coroner: "You cannot give any reason why Mr. Godfry should bring these three bottles to you?"
Walter Shenfield: "None, unless it was that as a chemist I should naturally be interested."
The Coroner: "Have you sold any drugs or articles to the late Mr. Monro recently."
Walter Shenfield: "Yes, on Wednesday morning I sold him a bottle of Eau de Cologne."
The Coroner: "On Wednesday morning last?"
Walter Shenfield: "Yes, sir."
The Coroner: "That was on the day of the wedding."
Walter Shenfield: "Yes, sir."
The Coroner: "What time was that?"
Walter Shenfield: "Nine in the morning."
The Coroner: "Did you sell him nothing else?"
Walter Shenfield: "No, sir, nothing. I let him have half-a-dozen stamps, as he had not time to go down to the post-office—nothing more."
The Coroner: "He seemed in good health and spirits?"
Walter Shenfield: "Never better."
The Coroner: "Was he excited at all?"
Walter Shenfield: "A little, but not more than was to be expected under the circumstances."
The Coroner: "What circumstances?"
Walter Shenfield: "His wedding."
The Coroner: "Oh, of course."
A Juryman: "I suppose no mention was made by you of the visit over night of Mr. Godfry?"
Walter Shenfield: "No, there was no necessity."
The Coroner: "Did Mr. Monro enter into conversation with you that morning?"
Walter Shenfield: "Only a word or two in response to my congratulations."
The Coroner: "Did he mention his nephew?"
Walter Shenfield: "No, sir."
The Coroner: "Has Mr. Godfry ever discussed the question of poisons with you before?"
Walter Shenfield: "Yes, sir." (Sensation.)
The Coroner: "In what way?"
Walter Shenfield: "He has expressed wonder at my researches and experiments."
The Coroner: "In regard to poisons?"
Walter Shenfield: "Yes, sir."
The Coroner: "In what particular directions have your studies been?"
Walter Shenfield: "In the discovery of antidotes."
The Coroner: "Did Mr. Godfry know this?"
Walter Shenfield: "Yes."
The Coroner: "Was he interested in the study?"
Walter Shenfield: "Not very much; he did not seem to appreciate the utility of such discoveries."
The Coroner: "Why?"
Walter Shenfield: "I do not know."
The Coroner: "But you just said that he had discussed the matter with you."
Walter Shenfield: "Oh, only very slightly—nothing beyond saying that if a man wanted to commit suicide one might as well let him do so, and not bother about antidotes."

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The Coroner: "He said *suicide?*"
Walter Shenfield: "Yes, sir."
Mr. Shenfield begins to look decidedly bewildered at the series of questions pointing directly to some connection between Mr. Godfry and the death of his uncle, and casts a furtive glance round the Court.
The Coroner: "Did you see Mr. Godfry on the day of the wedding?"
Walter Shenfield: "No, sir."
The Coroner: "Are you perfectly sure of that?"
Walter Shenfield: "Yes, sir."

"It looked black for Estlin Godfry."

The Corozer: "You have had no communication with him in regard to the bottles of poison you hold, since the sad occurrence?"
Walter Shenfield: "No, sir."
The Coroner: "That will do."
This concluded the evidence for the first day, and the Court was adjourned for a week.
There were not wanting wiseacres who sagely shook their heads as they discussed the evidence that night, and more than one sapient judge remarked that "It looked black for Estlin Godfry."

(To be continued.)

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4. All attempts to be in by Monday, June 8th.
5. Mark your envelope "Gymnasium, Number 5."

(41.) The word forming the solution to this problem signifies "Examination." The figures indicate the relative positions of the letters contained in the word.

Example: CONSUME. 1, 2, 6, 7, spell "to arrive."

Problem:

1. 3, 5, 6, 7, spell "a party."
2. 10, 9, 7, spell "a negative."
3. 10, 5, 3, 7, spell "an abode."
4. 3, 5, 10, 7, spell "did send."
5. 10, 9, 7, 5, spell "a short letter."
6. 4, 5, 3, 7, spell "to plague."
7. 7, 1, 2, spell "a metal."
8. 3, 7, 9, 9, 4, spell "to bend down."
9. 4, 5, 10, 3, spell "writing implements."
10. 3, 9, 4, spell "to dip in liquor."

(42.) Charade.

My first is to exceed.
My second is granted.
My whole is remarkable for good properties.

(43.) If K=51½, L=½, M=2, P=37½, and Y=18½, what word on this page has the greatest numerical value?

Example: LAMPREY.

L = ½
M = 2
P = 37½
Y = 18½

58½

(44.) If a lady start on a tricycle from a given point and ride at the rate of eight miles an hour, how far will she have gone before she is caught up by a man riding a safety at an average speed of thirteen miles an hour, who starts thirty-three minutes after, and alights four times for refreshments, making an average stay of four minutes at each place?

(45). Word Square.

The words defined below, when placed one over the other, will read across and downwards alike:

1. To gather.
2. Otherwise.
3. Serpents of a poisonous kind.
4. A plague.

(46.) Acrostics.

The initials and finals read downwards and upwards spell "a subordinate."

1. To wallow.
2. Out of date.
3. A mediæval weapon.
4. The words of an opera.

The initials and finals spell "a government official."

1. A pirate.
2. A plant.
3. A form of competition.
4. Inhabitants of an island in the Indian Ocean.

(47.) The letters constituting the words which form the key to this problem are mixed up in even pairs of words commencing from the first.

Example: Tu abt ort pehapahe=But at the approach.

Problem:

Nhac denes wet lahy, esa h tootd seher, sin had den kane derti yesapec nik oto fan dully preach teadpeti fob tueay she liren.

(48.) Make an anagram out of the following sentence:
Grasped by Death.

(49.) The following paragraph appears in this number of *Short Stories*. What is it?

"Ax txe cxxxxxxxxxxt x pxxxxxxl ixxxxxxxxn wxs sxxxxxxxxt tx dxxxxxxxe txxs hxxxxxxxxxxxn. Wxxxxxt axxxxxxxxg axxxxxxxn x axxxe axd wxxt tx mx cxxxxxr. A dxxh ox cxxd wxxxr ox txe fxxxxxxd rxxxxxxd cxxm. Txe sxxxxxe dxxxxxxxxxd axd x rxxxxxxd sxxxxxg.

(50.) What word on this page contains the greatest number of vowels?

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CLEAN OUT THAT SPRING.

"Tom," said my wife to me one morning at breakfast, "if you have time to-day I wish you would clean out the spring. The water doesn't taste just right, and there may be things in it that will make us ill. It's been running roily quite often lately, too."

Now that spring was about a quarter of a mile from the house, and the water came down through a pipe. We used it for everything—washing, cooking, and drinking. It was very soft and sweet, and practically the same temperature all the year round. But things would get into it, and so it was my job to give it an annual cleansing and scouring. Rather a wet and disagreeable task, but worth while; for after its purgation the spring sent out water clear as a diamond, and pure as Nature could brew it.

What flowing water is to the earth the blood is to the human body. Unless the blood is free from impurities you cannot be healthy. For that reason few persons are really in perfect condition, perhaps nobody. There is no such thing as curing any disease unless we can drive the germs or poisons which cause it out of the blood.

But how do impurities get into the blood? Through and from the stomach, for the blood is manufactured from the food in the stomach. When the digestion is perfect, or nearly so, the blood is virtually pure. It builds up the body, and gives elasticity, strength, and good spirits. When the digestion is bad the food ferments in the stomach and loads the blood with impurities, exactly as a foul spring or well sends out contaminated water. Take an example:

"In March, 1885," says Mrs. Ann Willis, of 51, Rigg Street, Crewe, "I found myself in a low, weak state of health. I ached all over, and was as weary and tired as though I had been working beyond my strength; yet that was not the cause. My appetite was poor, and after eating I was puffed and swollen at my chest and had a deal of pain. I was much troubled with maziness, and when out walking I feared I should fall down. My sleep was broken up and I felt as tired in the morning as when I went to bed. Then I got low and nervous. I couldn't bear company, and took no interest in anything. For nearly two years I was confined to my bed, under a doctor's care. It was in February, 1887, that a friend urged me to try Mother Seigel's Syrup. I got a bottle from the Co-operative Stores in West Street, and in a week I was greatly improved. I could eat better, and the food agreed with me. I was also brighter and in better spirits. I continued with the Syrup, and grew stronger and stronger, and able once more to do my work and enjoy my life. That is now eight years ago, and at this date, March 6th, 1895, I have had no return of the complaint."

"In the spring of 1889," says Mrs. Thomas Ward, newsagent, 276, Bridgeman Street, Bolton, "I felt strangely weak and ailing. At first I had a bad taste in the mouth, no appetite, and after eating I had weight and pain at the chest, and tightness around the waist. I had an awful pain at the pit of the stomach that never let up night or day, and made me irritable and wretched. After a time I got so bad I was afraid to eat—the food hurt me so. I became so weak that I almost fainted as I walked along the street. No medicine gave me relief. In March, 1890, after twelve months' suffering, my brother recommended me to use Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. He said he knew its virtues from a happy experience. I got a bottle from Mr. H. B. Pare, the chemist, in Lever Street, and it soon made me feel better, and in a few weeks it cured me completely. From that day to this (February 19th, 1895) I have been strong and well."

Thus we see it is as I said: to purify the blood we must do away with the indigestion, the dyspepsia; we must cleanse and tone the stomach, which (when diseased) is the foundation of all the mischief. This necessary task is done by Mother Seigel's Syrup, with a thoroughness that ensures a lasting and real cure. The whole body shares in the restoration, and so does the mind, whose powers rise and fall with the condition of the body. Now, as for the *stomach-spring*, don't wait for any set time to clean it out. Attend to it on the very day you perceive that it needs attention.

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PEOPLE WITH BRAINS SHOULD TURN TO PAGE 640.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 389. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 13TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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Risin' Sun METAL POLISH
Gives a beautiful soft brilliant polish to all kinds of Metal.

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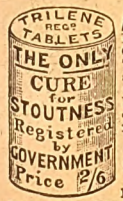

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No. 24
June 13, 1896.
S.S. S.S.

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Saves Extraction.
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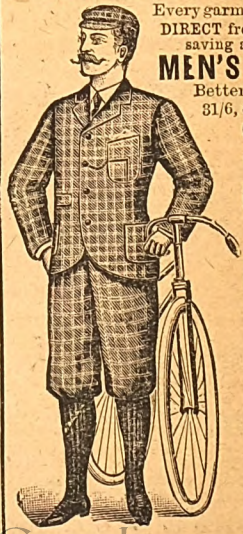

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 389.] For the Week ending June 13th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

CHAPTER I.

IT was Christmas Eve in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and sixty, when I first set foot within the mining camp of "Bungalow Bottom," situated on the most westerly border of California.

About three months previous to this important epoch, my father—a man of great principle and little mercy—had turned me out of doors in the most ignominiously neck and crop manner conceivable. Considering this, I could not doubt I was a very bad lot. True, I had never disgraced his house that *he* knew of, and moreover it is equally true, I had never disgraced any individual that *I* knew of.

But there it was.

"Go!" my father had said. "You won't work!"

This probably is the only mistake my father ever made in the whole course of his natural life. I would have worked had Nature adapted me so to do, but unfortunately she had not. Therein she wronged herself, my father, and me, and then burdened me with the blame. I did not condemn her on this account, for I am one of those enviable persons who believe that all things conspire, etc. One thing, however, struck me as being very remarkable, and that was—that I had never bathed in that tide of men's affairs, which if taken at the flood, etc.

On the day of my departure, my father had urged in response to my objections that my tide *had* flowed, and that I had failed to launch my lugger. This, he said, was when I was clerking at a retaining fee of seventy pounds per annum; but I couldn't see it that way at all. Hence his anger.

"Go!" he commanded. "Go away! Go anywhere! Go to the dogs at once, for that is your ultimate destination. You are of no use to man nor——" here he mentioned a supernatural Someone, for whom I entertain an honest and profound regard. Dutifully believing his latter statement, I proceeded to go to the dogs, choosing the route via Paris. Although generally the quickest way for a single young gentleman, it proved the reverse in my case; for something occurred there which laid the foundation of my narrative, influencing me at the same time to seek my fate by a more circuitous highway.

I was walking late one night amongst the deserted slums of the memorial city of Paris, when I was arrested by the sound of singing, at once sublime and earthly. It was too voluminous to suggest those spectral things that whisper to the sleeping poet, and it was too absolutely perfect to suggest anything so common as a prima donna of the earth—it was as little earthly as could be.

Lengthening my strides, I was thinking to pursue it when suddenly it burst upon me in all the beauty of it's thrilling magnificence. To my utter astonishment—though why, I can't say—the singer appeared before me, a veritable beggar. In the dim dark night, I could not determine her nationality, but I could see the threadbare clothing and unshod feet. I could see the voluptuous contour of her figure, despite the desperate endeavour of her ill-fitting garments to conceal it, and I could see the motionless human bundle at her breast, warmed by the fire of her gleaming eyes.

Seeing me, she stopped; both in her singing and passage. Likewise did I.

After a momentary hesitation I spoke to her in French, upon which she burst into a shriek of laughter, and whether she intended it or not, succeeded in mystifying me entirely.

Thinking perhaps that my accent was bad, or that my phrasing was badly turned, I threw all my genius and

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education into another effort, but without avail. She merely repeated her performance in a higher stave.

Struck by a really clever idea, I attacked every tongue of which I was student, but upon each occasion her laugh encompassed more octaves, and eventually she had me spluttering amid the ruins of my unsanctified vocabulary.

Had I not heard her singing, I should have thought her dumb or hungry when she approached me, and made the very equivocal movement of wobbling her finger about inside her mouth. As it was I inferred she wished to suggest ignorance of my meaning.

Coming close up to me, she held her little hand palm upwards, nodding in its direction with a vigour that would have made *my* head ache for months, had I chosen to attempt the feat. Gathering that she wanted money, I placed a coin in her hand, and then, turning down the covering of her bundle, I kissed the child.

An irresistible shudder shook me with frightful force as I realised it was stone dead. Momentarily forgetting myself, I sprang back, crying loudly in English: "Your child is dead!"

Another burst of her inane laughter greeted my remark as she passed on.

Gradually the laughter resolved into the transcendent singing, and burning at the heart, I went on my way musing.

From that moment the course of my life was changed, and I was victim—as I afterwards discovered—to that subtle and soul absorbing whim—love.

The next month it was that I altered my route, seeking my destiny viâ California.

The singer appeared before me, a veritable beggar.

Some may wonder at my leaving Paris at all, being as I said before, in love. But then, at that time I was not heedful of the fact.

Anyway, 'tis the truth I'm telling, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, etc.

CHAPTER II.

As before stated, it was Christmas eve in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and sixty, when I reached my journey's end. It was on the morning of the eve, so that before the miners of "Bungalow Bottom" had pitched down their shovels in varying disgust and satisfaction, I was instituted as lodger in a highly popular and respectable canteen, to which they invariably resorted after business hours.

Wishing to place myself upon friendly terms with everyone (the only constant idea of my life), I connived with the host to afford my future fraternity a jolly reception.

Beer and beef, punch and pie, bent the benches beneath their indigestible will.

One by one the diggers lounged in; some on their feet, others on *my* feet; but all more or less hearty.

They looked at the benches, then at the landlord, and finally at me. Some of the comparatively hearty ones invoked silent blessings on my head—or at least I supposed so. Some of the superlatively hearty ones grasped me and shook me, and seemed like to weep on my neck.

At length, when all were seated, one gawky wag volunteered the information that "Romeo of Russia wasn't here!"

Simultaneous with this assertion, the door opened, admitting the most distinguished-looking man I had ever seen during the whole spell of my existence.

Knowing something of Californian mannerisms and customs, I had expected to see some shrivelled old fossil, either idiotic or drunk. As it was, the man before me came as a brilliant revelation.

The humourous designation of "Romeo" was distinctly appropriate in its application, and of his hailing from Russia there could exist no manner of doubt. Although arrayed in the conventional mining costume, he bore indisputable traces of high breeding and quality.

Dressed consistently I could have conceived him a head amongst royalty. His face was naturally hairless, an omission Nature had rectified by a lavish abundance on the head. He walked with eyes fixed upon the ground, maintaining a semblance of stolid inscrutability.

I could not, dared not, approach him, or ask him to accept of my bounty. Once when his eye caught mine, he started, and his gaze swept me from crown to toe. Then taking his mug of liquor, he betook himself into a corner, and languished in the shade. He never vouchsafed a word to anybody, but remained with downcast eyes passively fixed upon the floor. My interest had left the company, and as anguish is embodied by emotion, so was my mind entrapped by Romeo of Russia. At that time I could not determine whether his power was the fascination of madness or of physical beauty and bearing; but anyway he flung a mystic spell about me I could not escape.

By this time the miners had abandoned their different benches, and were now seated circuitously around the stove. I fancied their laughs were quieter, and the jests less coarse, since the entrance of the Russian. Presently—and for the first time—this individual perceptibly moved. He shook himself, beat his temples with clenched hands, rolled his eyes about with his fore-

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fingers, and disentangled himself generally. Raising himself altogether, he took a seat in the very midst of his brethren. He had been drinking heavily, and his eyes were sullen beneath a yellowish film.

He started speaking as it were unconsciously, and his low musical tones contrasted strangely with his peculiar taint of the western twang.

"Pards!" he commenced. "To-night I'm goin' to tell yer all about myself an' the mousetrap. I've a reason for so doin', as yer will afterwards diskivver."

The "mousetrap" I subsequently learnt was his poetical name for fate.

"I'm goin' ter divulge ter yer keepin' a secret thet none of yer have ever dreamt on!"

Here the gawky wag above referred to arose with significant haste, accompanied by a croak, and left the saloon. The other miners took heavy swigs of liquor, concluding by sweeping their hands across their mouths, with a noise like a score of kettles boiling over. Not a man spoke.

"Y'all remember that gal, Pamela the Pagan."

They intimated that they did remember.

"I've often let drop snatches of her hist'ry as connected with mine, but not one o' yer knows as much about that same connexion as would kivver the brain of a fly."

That the company knew little on this head was evidenced by its smart attention. Dull of comprehension though it was, it nevertheless detected some unwonted animation in Romeo, and each man intuitively knew something unusual was coming. None attempted to quit the room, and each suffered himself to be chained with awakening interest. In ever heightening tones, with vacant stare, but reddening brow, Romeo of Russia resumed:

"Y'all call me Romeo, because I loved that gal. I don't mind that. My langidge an' my likes is just as yer own. My langidge so, cos I knoo no English, but what I larnt here. Yes, I loved that gal from the first. I allus loved her, an' I love her now, whenever thet red mist leaves my mem'ry. But pards, it's growin' redder an' redder every day."

Here he swayed like one in a baffled frenzy, and in the mysterious zest of his agitation, he stopped, running his fingers wildly through his hair. A dozen mugs were extended towards him, and he quelled his fearful fire with the contents of one. Afterwards, he continued, coherently and jointedly:

"That gal," he said, "I met once before. It was in Russia. Who she was, or where she came from, I never knoo. I only know that I loved her on fust sight, from which time my whole self became wrapped, so ter say, in her. It was only a brief intervoo that I had with her, an I saw her no more, until one day she came to my father's house with a child in her arms. She said—well, never mind. Who the child akchully belonged to, don't matter to enyone here.

"Upon that my father kicked me out of house an' home in a puffek temper o' passion, an' I came here.

"Likewise y'all know, over an' above wot I'm telling, I met her here, shortly after I came; but none on yer knows wot passed between us.

"Recollectin' rightly you'll likewise remember how that same gal could sing. Y'all thought she wor an angel; I know yer did, wot with her little harp, an' her lovely voice.

"After that, yer know, the sensation when my sister came to see me, all the way from Russia, trying to get me t' return, an' receive my father's parding.

Taking his mug of liquor, he betook himself into a corner.

"But I says, pards"—and his voice rose higher—"yer *don't* know as how the Pagan got jealous of my own sister, an' addishunally, yer don't know as how my beautiful unsu'pektin' sister loved her. Yer don't know that one night the devil himself seized the lovely Pagan, fillin' her mind with all the wickedness of the shades.

"That awful night"—he went on with growing fire—"them two were together. I was a sittin' dreamy like, in another room, listenin' to my sister playin' the harp, while Pamela sang.

"I saw their two shadders on the flimsy curtins between us, an' I heard the Pagan say:

"'Let's do the "Red Assignation"!'

"This latter, pards, was a piece of music—descriptive so ter say.

"Her imaginashun of other worlds couldn't come nigh it. It was supernat'ral, heavenly, murderous, unearthly, unhuman, an' poetic, all in one.

"I was lost like. They played an' played an' played, until I b'lieve I lost my wits.

"When evenchully I came to, the music had stopped, an' I started up. *Now* pards, mark yer—mark yer, I say, there was only *one* shadder on the curtin, an' that dretful still. It was my sister's.

"Alarmed at the awful quiet, I parted the curtins an' went in to her,

"Oh, boys! There was a sight ter stab the very seein' from yer eyes. There was a sight at which an angel might have shrieked, an' stiffened like death itself. It was a sight which put a tongue in every thought of

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horror, an' deafened my senses with the noise of its hideousness.

"My poor sister lay on the floor, lifeless. A great red wound lay gaping hungry on her breast, eating its lovely whiteness with its crimson fangs. A fearful long knife still shivered about in her heavenly heart, mocking my pain so ter say with its devilish nods. In addishun to all this, I noticed that her finger tips, and the veins up her arms, were charged with a deep and bulky purple colour.

"Then I looked at the harp, and touched it. The strings were damp, and sort o' very sharp.

"Yer know when I was ill, pards? Well that wasn't so much the shock of the sight I saw, as the dampness of that infernal instrument.

"The only thing I wonder at is, that she had done it twice over, so ter say: the harp or the wound would have been enough to do anyone, even ef they'd been more than mortal.

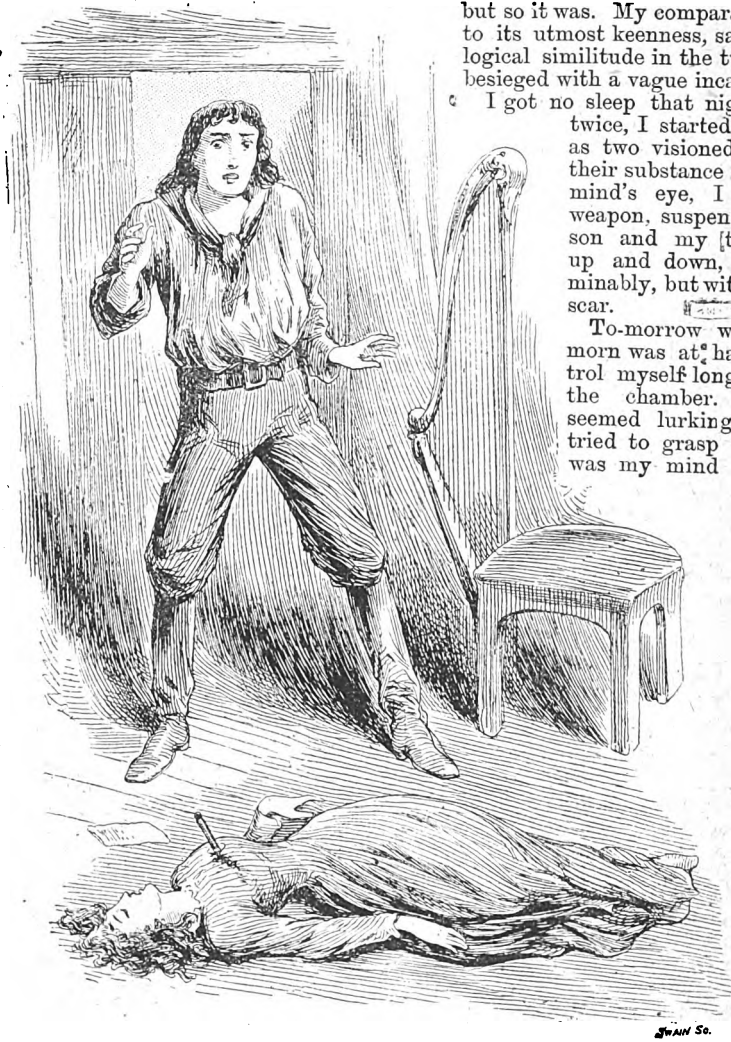
"Through all this I loved her—I couldn't help it; but there are times—well, never mind—she wor the mousetrap and I wor the mouse; but I ain't dead yet, am I?"

We signified a corroboration of this belief, and he continued with intensified power.

"Now p'raps yer a wonderin' why I have told yer this after keepin' silent so long! Wait a minit.

"By the side o' my dead sister, I found a bit o' paper, writ on in Russian. There wasn't much wordin'—only,

"'Christmas day, 1860.



"My poor sister lay on the floor, lifeless."

"That's why I tell yer now, pards. To-morrow's the day identical, an' I feel somethin's a hangin' over me like. What it is I don't know—I don't want to: it's awful, an' I am afeerd. Don't none o' yer touch me; don't speak ter me; but watch me, pards, for God's sake watch me!"

By this time his voice had risen to a perfect shriek, and, writhing from his seat, he fell face downwards to the floor, weeping like a child.

As one man the company rose without a word, left its mugs unemptied, and departed.

CHAPTER III.

I SOUGHT my chamber, beset with feelings I dare not describe. The Russian's painful narrative awoke in me a mysterious consciousness of some personal connection.

The woman whom he had described hung prominently on my thoughts, and somehow the likeness persistently blended itself with that of the strange unaccountable being I had met in Paris, carrying the dead child. Why this should have been so I could not imagine, but so it was. My comparative faculty, whetted to its utmost keenness, saw at least a psychological similitude in the two women, and I was besieged with a vague incalculable dread.

I got no sleep that night. Dozing once or twice, I started upright in my bed, as two visioned women commingled their substance and vanished. In my mind's eye, I saw a becrimsoned weapon, suspended between my person and my thoughts. It flashed up and down, wounding me interminably, but without physical pain or scar.

To-morrow was the day and the morn was at hand. Unable to control myself longer, I arose and paced the chamber. Nightly influences seemed lurking in every corner. I tried to grasp them, but no sooner was my mind about to encompass them, than they vanished: remaining impalpable as before.

Then, and not till then, did I realise the vast consuming volume of my passion for the woman I had met in Paris. My mind was ablaze. Each frenzied thought throbbed like lava through my brain, until I conceived it falling away, dissolved in the hissing current.

As the first dreary streaks of daylight came, I went out. Stealing about the camp like a wolf, I went to the door of every hut and listened.

Generally a deathly quietness reigned. At last, bent upon a rapid walk, I reached the extreme outskirts of the village, when suddenly my attention was arrested by a low moaning. Listening intently, I soon recognised the tones of Romeo of Russia, proceeding from a low, dilapidated shed before me. Selecting a hole in the most shaded corner of the boarding, I peered in.

The Russian was on his knees directly facing me. In the earthen floor he had scraped a large hollow, at the bottom of which lay embedded a rusty something I soon determined to be a harp. By his side lay a long, hideous

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knife, corroded with a substance I dared not think upon twice. Nearly sickened I turned away, pressing my hand to my forehead and trying to think collectedly.

The camp was stirring as I went back to my quarters. I tried to eat, but the attempt was a miserable failure; nothing could tempt me. Then I ordered some brandy, and under the comforting influences of this, I made a great determination.

"Woman or fiend," my spirit cried, "I love her still!" Upon this, I made rapid way to the diggings. Yes, there was the Russian working away as calmly and abstractedly as he had entered the saloon the night before.

Other miners, although it was Christmas, worked silently beside him. There was no noise, no coarse jest, no anything but work, work, work. Each man seemed impressed with something untold.

Impelled by my awful anxiety I hurried to the coach station. The weather was awful. Hail and sleet fell steadily and persistently. Burning within, and cold as death without, I waited on and on. Wet through and shivering I waited until night fell; aye and long after that.

The station was deserted: not a soul being in sight notwithstanding the fact that the coach was long overdue.

Seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven o'clock.

Half-past.

And then in the distance I heard a rumbling of wheels. With the faint refracted lights, the coach dashed up, bearing one solitary passenger, and that a woman closely veiled.

As one the weapons descended.

A shriek—a whoop—a hoarse cry, and the coach was gone. A great inconceivable thrill swept through me as the solitary woman brushed by me in the direction of the camp.

In a dozen strides I was at her side, with one hand upon her arm. With the other, and without ceremony, I tore off her veil.

Imagine my feelings then. Imagine my feelings upon finding my terrible premonition fulfilled.

It was she—the idol of my whole being—but how ghastly white! Her eyes flashed fiercely upon me, aggravating my every pulse to madness. Little wonder Romeo had fallen.

"Woman! Don't go—don't go!" I whispered. "You don't know what awaits you. Turn back whilst you have time—for God's sake turn back!"

Again those wondrous eyes flashed fiercely upon me, and muttering angrily, she passed on.

In another instant, an instant rife with all the madness of agony, I was beside her again.

"Fool!" I hissed. "Do you hear me? Don't go, I tell you. Treachery lurks in every breath of God's air to-night. Turn back! Come with me."

Again I laid my heavy, burning hand upon her arm, but with a sound more like the hiss of a serpent than the cry of a human being, she wrested herself away and literally flew into the mist. With a furtive pang of anguish I pursued her. She was upon the borders of the camp before I overtook her. This time I placed myself before her, exerting all my strength in the abandon of my love.

Catching her by the wrist again, I literally shrieked: "Out of the love I bear you, I urge you not to go further."

"You *shall* not—before heaven——!"

In less than a trice, she had a glittering weapon lifted high above me. It quivered on its downward course.

Simultaneously a figure, looking blacker than this blackest of nights, glided from out the shadow like the prong of a colossal serpent. It writhed swiftly between my breast and the glittering knife, at the same time poising its own corroded blade.

As one the weapons descended, thrust with a vigour equalling the trinity of Hate and Love and Despair.

A shriek which split the heavens like a thunderblast flew upwards, as the knives crashed to their hilts in the bosoms of Pamela the Pagan and Romeo of Russia.

NINEPENCE contributed to our FRESH AIR FUND will give a day in the Country to one poor child. All sums received will be acknowledged in the columns of *P.W.*

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Two Wedding Rings.

SHARP and loud came the sound of the postman's knock, cutting the frigid winter air like a knife-blade.

I started up from the sofa, where I had been dreaming over the morning paper, with a cheery crackle of the wood fire close beside me, and the scent of my morning coffee steaming gratefully up from the chased-silver equipage on the little round table.

(The bachelor's mode of life is not altogether without its advantages, after all.)

"Mrs. Metcalfe," I called out, putting my head over the stair-rail (which hadn't been dusted that morning; boarding-house stair-rails never do get dusted until noon if you have ever observed it), "is there anything for me?"

An ominous silence. I knew as well as if I were on the spot that the landlady's daughter was reading my post-cards, holding my letters up between her eye and the light, and indulging in other proceedings peculiar to the genus "landlady's daughter."

"I say," I reiterated, throwing a little spice of exasperation into my accent, "is there anything for me?"

"Coming, sir! Coming!" And Miss Melinda Metcalfe shuffled upstairs with my correspondence on a japanned tray.

"Is there any news?" said I sarcastically as I took my letter, my two post-cards and my newspaper.

"Sir?" said Miss Melinda.

"I didn't know but that you were opening my post," said I blandly.

"Oh, sir, I shouldn't think of such a thing!"

And Miss Melinda went downstairs, tossing her head like an enraged Shetland pony.

One card from my tailor, to notify me of his change of business residence; one from Louis Durande to tell me that he could not keep a certain engagement with me, and a letter from Percy Wyncote, who had warmed his slippers at the same college fire with me scarcely three years ago.

"Dear Belton," so his epistle ran, "I claim your congratulations. I am to be married next week to the sweetest girl the sun ever shone on. There's surprise number one for you. And I wish you'd go to Goldluck and Glitterman's and get the wedding ring, size inclosed on a bit of paper. There's surprise number two. Seriously, old fellow, it will do me a great favour, for business matters here are complicated in such a way that I cannot hope to get down to London a day before the event. And of course I know that I can trust your taste and judgment equally with my own. Have the words 'Helen, 1896,' engraved on the inside, and please send by express without delay.

"Ever yours faithfully,
"PERCY WYNCOTE.

"P.S.—She is an angel.

"P.P.S.—She's for all the world the counterpart of that lovely girl on the cover of this month's *Pearson's*."

"Well," said I to myself, laying down my old chum's rapturous letter, "here's a pretty commission for a bachelor. An angel, is she? I don't believe she's any more angelic than Pauline Brookes. But every man thinks his own goose a swan. I pity the poor fellow I'm sure; he's clearly in a state of glamour that make him see everything *couleur de rose*. But I'm not one to desert a friend at a pinch—I'll buy his miserable wedding-ring with the greatest pleasure in life."

So I locked my desk, put on my seal-trimmed overcoat, and went straightway to Goldluck and Glitterman's.

Jones was behind the counter. I knew Jones; I had bought a gold bracelet of him for Pauline Brookes six months ago. Jones was a dapper little fellow, with a stiffly-waxed moustache, a cameo scarf-pin and hair bedewed with some ambrosial perfume or other.

"Wedding-rings, if you please," said I, plunging *in medias res*, without loss of time. "Here's the size," producing my slip of paper.

"Any inscription, sir?" questioned Jones, assuming so preternaturally knowing an aspect that I could cheerfully have pitched him in among the plated ware in the big glass show-case behind him.

"Helen," said I brusquely, "1896."

"H'Emma, sir?" Jones put his hand behind his ear.

"Helen!" I bawled out, painfully conscious that the eyes of the three pretty girls who were looking at turquoise lockets at the counter beyond were upon me.

"Very pretty name," simpered Jones, as he wrote down the order. "Any particular style?"

"Simple and solid," said I; "that's all."

"Yes, sir. It shall be attended to at once," said Jones.

"Shall I send it to your residence or——"

"I'll call for it to-morrow," said I.

"Pardon me, Mr. Belton," cried old Mr. Glitterman, who had overheard a portion of our colloquy, "but it wouldn't be taking a liberty to inquire whether you intend to keep house or board——"

"What?" ejaculated I.

"To keep house or board?" reiterated Mr. Glitterman. "Because in the former case we should esteem it a favour to supply the silver and tableware."

I muttered some not particularly complimentary

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answer and went out of the shop, closing the door behind me with some emphasis.

* * * * *

"Going to be married, eh, old chap?" said Sniffins, familiarly thrusting his elbow into my side, as I strolled into the Monico for my lunch that day.

"No!" said I, taking up the carte.

"Oh, come, don't deny the soft impeachment," said Sniffins, with a wink.

"What has put such an idea as that into your head?" demanded I, somewhat indignantly.

"Name of Helen," said Sniffins, with an idiotic giggle. "Waiter, *pâté de foie gras* here! Let's drink her health, Belton, when——"

At this stage I pretended to see someone whom I knew at an opposite table, and bolted across the room.

* * * * *

Old Mr. Jessup was trotting across Piccadilly Circus, as I came out, with a brown silk umbrella under his arm.

"Eh?" said Mr. Jessup, turning upon me the moony glare of two spectacled eyes. "What's this I hear about you, my dear young friend? Accept my congratulations. Matrimony is always a blessed estate, and——"

"Oh, yes, I don't doubt it, sir," I hurriedly interrupted, "but—a—there's some mistake about it——"

"Miss what did you say," said old Mr. Jessup beamingly. "Call round this evening and tell us all about it, there's a good fellow. I haven't time to listen just now!"

I could have torn my hair with rage. Mr. Jessup was Pauline Brooke's uncle and guardian, and I knew that my chances in that direction would be all off if once the fatal story of the wedding ring got to Pauline's ears.

I hurried up Regent Street mentally gnashing my teeth, and in my impetuous haste had nearly stumbled over Pauline herself, just coming out of a florist's with a tiny *boutonnière* of violets in her hand.

"Pauline!" cried I rapturously. But Pauline drew back the least little distance in the world, thereby putting an invisible barrier between us that froze me like an icicle.

"Dear me, Mr. Belton, is it you?" said Pauline. "I congratulate you I am sure!"

"Upon what?" I demanded, growing desperate.

"Upon your approaching marriage, to be sure!" said Pauline, with a smile like auroral lights hovering over a snowbank.

"But I'm not going to be married," protested I.

"Oh, excuse me, pray! Gentlemen do not usually buy wedding rings without a purpose," interposed Pauline. "Only I should think you might have paid such old friends as we are the compliment of some slight intimation of your impending marriage."

"Pauline," said I—"Miss Brookes—hear me. There is only one woman in the world I would care to marry, and she stands before me now!"

Pauline's lips quivered—the tears sparkled into her eyes.

"Mr. Belton," said she, "you may regard all this as a very bad joke, but surely, surely, it is not necessary to add any more insult to it——"

"Do you mean that you don't believe me?"

"How can I believe you?" retorted she.

Driven to a sort of frenzy, I dragged Wyncote's letter from my pocket.

"Pauline," said I, "read that and you have a read solution of the mystery of the wedding ring."

Her face cleared up as she glanced over the contents of poor Wyncote's ecstatic missive.

"Poor fellow!" said she. "He's very much in love, isn't he?"

"Not half so much as I am," said I. And then in the smilax-bordered shadow of the florist's I pressed my suit.

"Dear Pauline, let me order another wedding ring?"

"For whom?" demanded my lady-love.

"For you. I have loved you this long time, but I never had the courage to avow my love before, dear Pauline."

"Hush!" said Pauline. "We musn't stand talking here."

"I won't stir a step until you answer me."

"What shall I say?" hesitated Pauline.

"Say yes."

I ordered the duplicate wedding ring that very night. Pauline said it was too soon, but I quoted the ancient proverb: "Delays are dangerous." And we are to be married in a month. And if it hadn't been for the providential interruption of Wyncote's wedding ring, I might still have been shivering on the brink of an unspoken proposal. "Blessed be wedding rings," say I.

JULIA SCHLOMM.

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Merely A Dog

"WILL you come and dine with me to-morrow, Gregory?"

"Thanks, very much, old fellow; but the sixteenth of this month is always observed by me as a solemn day. It is the anniversary of Jack's death, you know."

"Jack! Might I ask who Jack was?"

"My little fox-terrier. I thought you knew."

"A dog. Do you mean to say seriously that you keep the anniversary of a fox-terrier's death as a fast day?"

"And why not? Jack's life was sacrificed for his master's. To his death I owe my existence. Shall I not at least keep his memory green by setting aside one day out of the year to his honour? Shall I tell you the story?"

"Yes; I should like to hear it."

"Well, then, we must go back ten years. I was then a clerk in the employ of a firm called Wilkins and Stokes. They were merchants in the Portugese trade—first class people, and, as the banks say, 'good for anything they might undertake.' But there came a panic in the trade. Some big firms in Lisbon and Oporto failed, and some of the leading London houses were dragged down with them. It became known that Wilkins and Stokes had become involved and were in difficulties, their credit was damaged, they were pressed on all hands, and finally driven into the bankruptcy court.

"My berth had been a good one, and I had fondly hoped that it was as secure as anything can be in the City. I had been a thriftless fool, and when I suddenly found myself thrown out of employment, I had nothing whatever to fall back upon. My parents were dead, and my nearest relative was an aunt somewhere in the country, a woman of slender means, of whom I knew very little. I sought employment diligently from morning till night, but without avail. The special knowledge that I had acquired of Portuguese business was of no use to me in the state of the trade, and there were hundreds of clerks possessed of a general knowledge of office routine, who were ready to snap up, at a moment's notice, any berth that might fall vacant.

"Month after month went on, and I was still out of work. I had borrowed from every friend I possessed, to keep body and soul together, until these sources of assistance were utterly exhausted. My clothes were so badly worn that they became a new obstacle to my obtaining a berth, and I was deep in debt to my landlady—a kind-hearted and long-suffering woman, of whom I felt it was cruel to take advantage.

"One evening in October—the sixteenth—I was utterly dejected and despondent. I had spent the day in making my usual tour of City offices, and in scanning the advertisement columns of the daily newspapers. But when night come, and I walked back to my lodgings, I felt as if all hope had departed from me. A great change seemed to have come over me that day. I no longer cared for what happened. I had a feeling that the struggle was over, that I had done my best, and could and would do no more. Such a life was not worth living. Why not end it?

"Never before that evening had I contemplated suicide, but now the idea possessed me, enslaved me. It was so easy, so reasonable, so complete a solution of all my difficulties. I had not asked to live. Why should I be forbidden to die? A man who had others dependent on him was a coward to put an end to himself; but I—whom did it concern what happened to me? One City acquaintance would say to another: 'You remember Harold Gregory—used to be with Wilkins and Stokes?—I hear he blew his brains out, or something of the sort. By the way, have you seen the new Gaiety burlesque?' That's all.

"Well, I went to my bedroom; I scribbled a note and left it on my dressing-table. I took my revolver from my drawer and placed it in my pocket. Telling my landlady that I should not return home until very late I stepped into the street and banged the door behind me.

"Turning round, I saw that my terrier, Jack, was beside me. During that terrible time of proverty and anxiety I had never parted with Jack. The faithful dog had been almost my only friend. Poor brute, he must not accompany me now. I stooped down and caressed him.

"'Jack,' I said, 'you must go indoors. You can't come with me to-night.' But he looked up at me with such pleading eyes. I verily believe that he knew what I was going to do, and he seemed to be saying: 'Let me go! If you must die, at least let me die with you!'

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"I relented, and he kept by me all the way. It was a dark, chilly night, with a fine drizzling rain, as I walked along the slippery streets towards the park. A load seemed to have been lifted off my shoulders, and I felt that the battle of life for me would now soon be over. But my thoughts were more of Jack than of myself. I resolved that he should die first. It was better than that he should live to mourn his master and fall into cruel hands. And, perhaps, after all, the Indian, with his untutored mind, was right in supposing that in the happy hunting grounds 'his faithful dog should bear him company.'

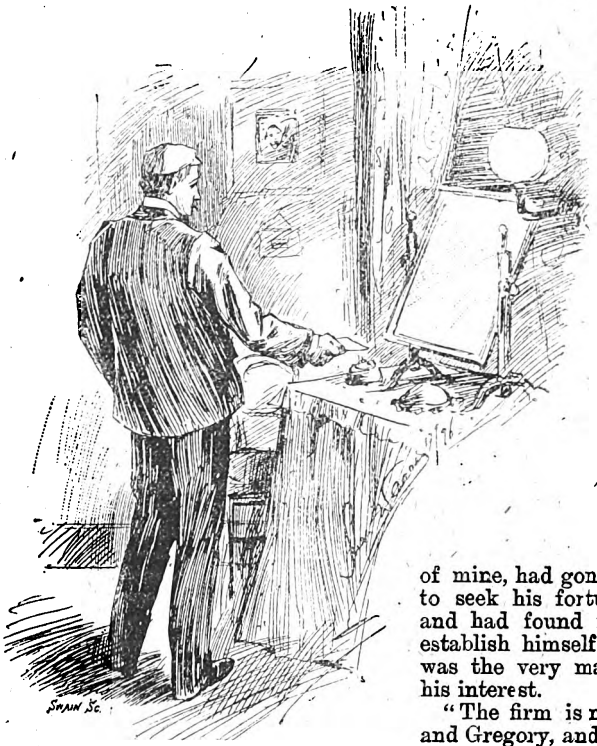
"When we got to the park, I sought a secluded spot, and halted. Taking the dog in my arms, I said: 'Jack, you have been a faithful dog. We will die together. I must kill you first; but I won't play you false, old fellow, the next bullet will send me after you. Good-bye, Jack! Dear old Jack!'

"I placed the muzzle of my revolver against his head. He did not flinch, but raised his trustful eyes to mine. I pulled the trigger, and the poor dog rolled over—dead.

"I did not hesitate a minute in next placing the revolver against my right temple. My hand was steady, and I felt no fear. I carefully judged my aim, and again pulled the trigger. There was no report! The chambers were all empty.

"I speak the truth when I say that my feelings were not of relief and thankfulness. I was simply enraged at my disappointment. For a moment I stood bewildered, then threw the weapon away into the darkness. I would not be foiled. Was there not the river, in which I could drown myself?

"Kneeling down first to take a hasty farewell of poor Jack, I made my way back into the street. I had not a penny in my pocket, so had to make my journey on foot.



"I scribbled a note and left it on my dressing-table."

In turning a corner a man stopped me to inquire his way. We passed beneath a lamp, and as we glanced into one another's faces there was an instant mutual recognition.

"'Gregory!'

"'Mansfield!'

"'Why, Gregory, old fellow, you are the very man I want. I have been trying to find you everywhere, but since Wilkins and Stokes smashed nobody could tell me where I might lay hands on you. I want—why, how ill you look! Been down on your luck, old boy? So I heard. Broke, I suppose. Well, come back with me to my hotel; I want to have a chat with you at once.'

"Mansfield, an old chum of mine, had gone abroad many years before to seek his fortune—nobody knew where—and had found it. He had come back to establish himself in business, and he said I was the very man he wanted to look after his interest.

"The firm is now, as you know, Mansfield and Gregory, and I am very far from wishing myself dead.

"But remember this: If poor Jack had not received that bullet in his brain, it would have entered mine. I played the poor dog false, after all, so the least I can do is to keep him in affectionate remembrance. And to-morrow is the 16th October."

MADGE MORRIS.

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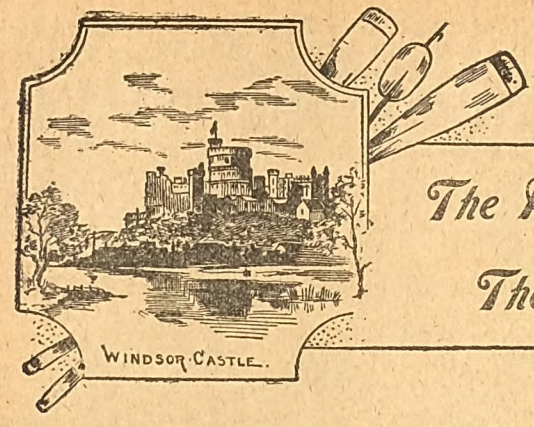
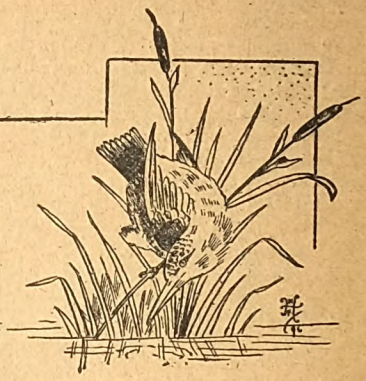


The Nightingale AND The Griffin.



It is very rare that a pretty woman in Europe possesses a harsh voice, while a musical organ is seldom unaccompanied by pleasant features.

As an abiding proof of the infallibility of a musical ear I well remember when I was living in Brussels, how my attention was attracted one summer evening by the sweetest voice I ever listened to.

My rooms were in a street at a corner of the place in which stands that Grand Hotel de Ville, with its arcades and its high roof perforated with innumerable mansard windows, and its gothic spire, which is only inferior to that of the cathedral at Antwerp.

As I said before, it was summer, just beginning, when roses are within every one's price, and the sun has not become too sultry during the day to make the evenings heavy.

Somehow or other I did not feel inclined to go in the Park, where there is a splendid orchestra, most inferior beer, and worse coffee; the theatres were all closed, and I had no wish to encounter the hordes of wandering tourists in the Galleries St. Hubert.

The chimes had just sent their last vibration echoing round the square when I first heard the exquisite voice of my evidently lovely neighbour opposite.

I had often scanned the two windows with their guipure curtains, their embroidered blinds—the Belgians are fond of an ornamental lace centre—and their rose-bushes in bright vermilion-painted pots upon the sills.

It was not affluence, but it certainly was comfort, added to a feminine taste, which argued with the voice, not only beauty, but culture: and to judge by the touch on the piano, an unrivalled education.

The first strains fell like heavenly melody from the sky for the voice floated up above me, as I fancied, and must have been sung by some wandering angel who had descended near us to catch the ancient chimes.

But soon through the tranquil air I thought I caught the words which were not likely to emanate either from Gabriel or Michael. "*Comme à vingt ans*," was not very new even then; but sung by such a voice, its sweetness was doubly thrilling, and I listened with open mouth and beating heart to verse after verse, as the sentiment changed from gay to grave and back again to patient resignation.

Such a young voice could only regret its twenty years for song's sake.

Sweet seventeen only thought of the charming melody, and cared little for the words; though the chastened melancholy of the refrain was well preserved all through.

Ah! I could see her, poor darling, all alone; for there was only one rigid old maid to watch over her; a griffin in a silver-grey alpaca dress, who flitted weirdly past the curtains and went periodical journeys to the markets for her young mistress.

When the voice was silent, I could hear the fingers recalling Chopin's tenderest mazurkas, or Mendelssohn's songs, till tears would start to my eyes as I sympathised with the caged nightingale.

When even the piano was no longer audible, I could not resist taking my violin and interweaving the melodies I had heard, with a strain which, I flattered myself, accurately expressed my respectful longing for the invisible cantatrice.

I fell asleep that night in a seventh heaven of harmonious æons, where archangels and houris played silver trumpets and golden zithers in a sort of Walkyr fuge, while one fair head in a glory of brilliant auburn hovered permanently over the divine orchestra. The annoying part of the dream was that the head had its back towards me, not a feature could I see.

Occasionally the griffin would come in with a trombone accompaniment, much to the discomfiture of Gabriel's trumpet call: but silver trumpets, golden zithers, and auburn halos were all forgotten by the time I went across the Place in the morning to get my early coffee.

As I crossed the street I saw the griffin, quintessence of repelling respectability, with her small key and her large basket, on her way to market; and I watched for the postman who brought my letters, and actually had the hardihood to look over his shoulders as he slipped a letter under my fair neighbour's door and there read "Mdlle. Blanche Rosat" in a fine Italian hand.

"Rosat" suggested summer, the Graces and Paphos, at the least, while the youth and virgin candour of her *petit nom* "Blanche" corroborated all my fancy had painted, and completed the perfection of my ideal.

There was some cruel mystery attached to my poor Blanche—she was *my* Blanche already, as I whispered in confidence to my violin. She was never allowed to leave the house unless, as I suspected, the griffin took her out when the night shades fell over the tranquil city.

Many a time I watched at my window when the voice and the instrument had ceased; many a time I stood at the corner of the street in sanguine expectation of catching a glimpse of the pretty prisoner and her sour-visaged gaoler; but all in vain. The griffin seemed to know when I was sentry, and took especial care to take her walks abroad alone.

I now knew exactly the hours when my Blanche sat down

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to her piano. I know she used to expect my presence, for the guipure curtains would shake, and the lace-embroidered blind would flutter, as if some hand were there and some eye at watch to note whether or not I was at my post.

At my post? Why, I used to run away from my *table d'hôte* if the courses were longer than usual, or the dessert later in arriving, rather than miss a note of the divine Blanche's song. I really believe I should have burst into tears if the song had not come or the piano remained untouched after I opened my window for my nightly audience.

By night and by day Blanche so possessed my thoughts that I was determined to risk even the overwhelming angers of the griffin; and, sitting down seriously to my desk with a sheet of pink paper, highly scented with some musky horror, I wrote the first lines my poetical soul dictated to me.

I could write French well, but I had never perpetrated anything in French verse, and I fear I mixed up voices and souls, and fading forms to such a perplexing extent that Blanche, if she ever read my lines, must have doubted much of my sanity, unless her young affections were as exercised as mine.

There was no answer to my lines. My hopes had risen, when I saw the griffin with a flushed face making rapid tracks for the melon stall. I fondly hoped some three-cornered note wrapped round a pebble might fly across the street from her window into mine.

I did not receive any answer, either that day or the next.

The voice seemed to become more plaintive, more pleading, as if there were something to forgive, something to excuse; but if that was a reply, it did not satisfy my ardent devotion, and I wrote again, not in verse this time, but in correct grammatical sentimental prose.

"The prayer of an ardent admirer, your devoted slave, who longs for the day when that sweet voice will command him. If I have as yet never seen your ravishing features, I believe that so lovely must be the soul which hides behind that divine voice, that any face it owns must be heavenly in my eyes; any form that of a goddess inspired by such a voice. Listen to my prayer, sweet divinity, and let me at your feet express the delight your sweet song has afforded me."

I felt that such words could only emanate from a heart absolutely and uncontrollably in love.

At last the answer came. Only a few words, in a long distinguished hand which breathed youth and affection in every line. "Live and hope" was all it meant, and almost all it said.

That night there was a bright sparkle in the clear, melodious harmony that came out on the air. It sang of life and hope for two young hearts which pined apart, and now at last were coming together.

I wrote again more daringly, more fervently. I adored her voice, and asked to be allowed to press the fingers which touched the piano I had so long listened to.

The answer came again, and this time I was promised an appointment for the next evening, when I should be allowed to meet Blanche, my adored Blanche.

All day my heart was too much for me. It fluttered and twitted and chirped in the most aggravating way; I could neither eat nor drink, and even my violin was forgotten.

I wandered among the trees of the park, down by the side of the canal, through the palace picture galleries, without noting a Rubens or a Schneyder; along the arcades without gazing into a single shop-window.

Oh! but it was an eternity to wait until seven o'clock.

As the clock of St. Gudule struck seven I was at her door, and, finding it open, I stepped upstairs to her room.

Blanche was waiting for me. I could hear the prelude to one of Schumann's songs, as her fingers ran lightly and lovingly over the keys.

The room was in half shadow, but all within and on the walls spoke of its young mistress's taste and love of art.

In the centre of the room, concealing the music-stool and the piano from me, stood the griffin, flushed, and with her eyes cast down.

"Ah! monsieur! who could help being touched by such devotion? I feared, I dreaded the meeting, but constancy like yours——"

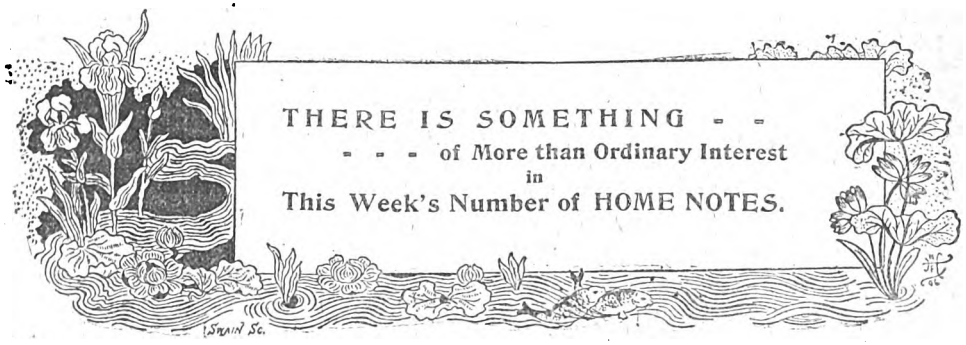
"Must be rewarded!" I gasped. "Oh! let me see my Blanche, whose angel voice has held such sweet communion with me. Bring me to Blanche!"

"She is here!" whispered the gushing griffin. "I am Blanche Rosat!"

* * * * *

It was rude, it was indeed most unfeeling, but I rushed from the room, dashed home, packed my violin into my hatbox, and left Brussels for ever. The griffin and the nightingale were one and the same. I shall never, so long as I live, trust a voice again.

M. M.



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BY JOHN K. LEYS, *author of "The Tenth of June," etc., etc.*

SUMMARY.

WHILE on a sketching tour in Wales, LAUNCELOT VERE gets into a dangerous position on the face of a precipice. His life is saved by WINIFRED DENVERS, to whom he becomes engaged. On the wedding morning LAUNCELOT fails to put in an appearance at church, and no news can be heard of him. Miss UNWIN, the village schoolmistress, has disappeared at the same time. HAROLD KENYON, a friend of LAUNCELOT'S, determines to leave Wythecombe in search of his friend, and goes to London. He finds that the missing man has drawn £75 from his bank, and also discovers several sketches of Miss UNWIN in the artist's room. PAUL SHENSTONE presses his suit with KATHERINE DALE, who unwillingly agrees to marry him in October. WINIFRED is still convinced of LAUNCELOT'S innocence of any foul play. KENYON interviews the guard of the train by which Miss UNWIN travelled to London, and finds that she was met by a man corresponding in description to VERE. On return to town he finds that Miss UNWIN has been murdered on Hampstead Heath, and the trial reveals the fact that she and VERE were at one time very friendly.

KATHERINE DALE,	A young lady with whom HAROLD KENYON is in love.
PAUL SHENSTONE,	Engaged to KATHERINE DALE.
REV. MARK DENVERS,	Rector of Wythecombe, and WINIFRED'S father.
MR. BEAUMONT,	A solicitor, and friendly with VERE.
MR. DAUNT.	An old lawyer, and friendly with VERE.

CHAPTER IX.

THE REVOLVER CASE.

WHILE Mrs. Unwin had been giving her evidence, Harold Kenyon had been exchanging signs of recognition with the Coroner's clerk, a young man named Tyler. He had been one of the junior clerks in the branch bank in which Kenyon had been employed before he went down to Darnport.

During the adjournment the two exchanged a few words, and Kenyon took the opportunity of saying:

"Wasn't there a revolver found beside that poor girl's body?"

"Yes," answered the clerk.

"Do you think you could get me an opportunity of looking at it."

"Don't know I'm sure. The police inspector has charge of it."

"Ask him for it. He will think the Coroner wants it, and give it to you at once. I only want to look at it."

Tyler did as he was asked. He got the revolver, and handed it to his friend.

The room was nearly empty; and Kenyon carried the weapon to one of the windows, that he might examine it at his leisure.

It was a dainty little thing, this murderous toy, hardly larger than the handle of an umbrella stick. Harold knew enough about small arms to see that it was of an uncommon pattern. Judging from the delicate workmanship one would have supposed that it had been manufactured on purpose to be presented to some one.

The case which Kenyon had found in Vere's room lay in one of the outside pockets of his overcoat. He drew it out of his pocket, and slipped the revolver into it. It fitted to a nicety! Every tiny projection was provided for by a depression in the soft velvet. It was only what Harold had expected; yet a shudder passed through his limbs, as he realised what the testimony of this dumb witness meant.

Suddenly a hand was laid on Harold's shoulder, and in an instant he recognised the madness of his conduct. But it was too late.

He looked up, and found a police inspector gazing at him curiously.

"That seems a very good fit. Just let me look at it, sir," said the man.

Harold thrust the revolver and case into his pocket, and confronted the officer of justice with set teeth and a frown on his face.

"If I'm not mistaken," said the policeman, "that's the very weapon I'm supposed to have charge of. I thought the Coroner wanted to have a look at it, or I wouldn't have let it out o' my sight. Let me see it for a moment. If it's not the right one I'll give it back to you."

To have hesitated longer would simply have brought Tyler into trouble without improving matters in the least. Harold disengaged the revolver from the case without drawing it out of his pocket, and then handing it to the policeman, walked hastily to the door.

"Not so fast, sir," said the inspector, making a sign to a comrade who stood by the door. "This is the weapon, sure enough. And now, perhaps you'll let me have a look at the case?"

Harold took time to consider.

The policeman had no right to arrest him, no power to search him and take the case from him. But the officer would immediately appeal to the Coroner, who, he felt sure, legally or illegally, would never let him leave the premises a free man till he had given up the case. Obstinacy could only result in his being committed to prison for contempt of court, and in that event the revolver-case would be taken by force.

He surrendered the case; and the inspector, telling his subordinate to keep an eye on Harold, carried it, with the revolver, to the Coroner.

Thirty seconds had not elapsed before the Coroner came into the room, an excited look on his face.

"Where is the gentleman? Oh, this is he! I presume you have come here to give information about this revolver."

"No, I never saw the thing before, to my knowledge."

"About the case then."

"No. It isn't mine."

"Who gave it to you? I see the revolver fits it accurately." Then, seeing that Kenyon made no reply, he added: "You need not trouble to answer. The jury will be back in five minutes; and when the court reassembles, I shall summon you as a witness."

Almost before he could frame a reply, a *subpœna* was

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thrust into his hand. In a few minutes he found himself at the table, the Testament in his hand. He laid the book down without kissing it.

"Stop a moment," he said to the Coroner. "You seem to be under a misapprehension. I know nothing whatever about this girl, or the manner in which she came by her death. I never saw her in my life. Nor did I ever see the revolver found beside her. I merely looked at it out of curiosity. It is true it fits a pistol case I had in my pocket; but that is merely an accident. Any other revolver—many revolvers, at any rate—would fit it equally well."

"Very true, perhaps," said the Coroner in a guarded manner, "but it is quite necessary that I should put one question to you."

"What is that, sir?" interrupted Kenyon.

"And that you should answer it upon oath. Be good enough to take the book once more in your right hand."

There was no escape; and Harold had time to reflect, as the Coroner arranged his papers, that the time for concealment had gone by. The more he fenced with the Coroner's questions and tried to screen his friend, the more would he arouse and strengthen suspicion. If he refused to answer, he would cause everyone to believe that he knew something more damning than even the possession of the case.

"Where did you get this case?" was the Coroner's first question.

Kenyon made no reply.

"I will give you a minute or two to make up your mind," said the Coroner.

For two minutes by the clock there was dead silence in the room. Then the Coroner spoke again.

"I can see that you are trying to shield some one, some friend, probably, and to a certain extent I sympathise with you. But, believe me, you are only injuring your friend's cause. Of course, if you persist in remaining silent, you will have to go to prison, and we shall get the information we want in some other way."

Before Kenyon could make up his mind as to how he should shape his reply, Mrs. Unwin, looking fixedly at the revolver, which lay upon the table in its case, said:

"That's Mr. Vere's revolver, sir. I'm sure of it. Now that it is in the case I can swear to it. He brought it down to Richmond, to Mr. Pascoe's I mean, to put it in a picture he was painting."

"Then your daughter may have borrowed it, may have had it by her all this time," observed the Coroner. And without giving the woman time to reply, he added, speaking to Kenyon: "You see that possession of the revolver-case cannot be conclusive evidence against any one. But we can easily find Mr. Vere's address; and if the case was his, some one must have seen it in his room. We shall be able to get corroboration of Mrs. Unwin's testimony independently of you. Come, now. Reflect that if your friend is really guilty you ought not to stand in the way of justice reaching him. If he is innocent, as I hope he is, his innocence will be made clear. You picked up that case in Mr. Vere's room, did you not?"

"Yes, I did."

The words were spoken at last, and Harold hardly knew whether he was acting the part of a true man or that of a false friend as he spoke them.

"What is his address?"

"Twenty-six Cumber Street."

"He must be sent for at once," said the Coroner, turning to a policeman.

"It is of no use," said Harold. "He is not at home. He has not been at his rooms since——"

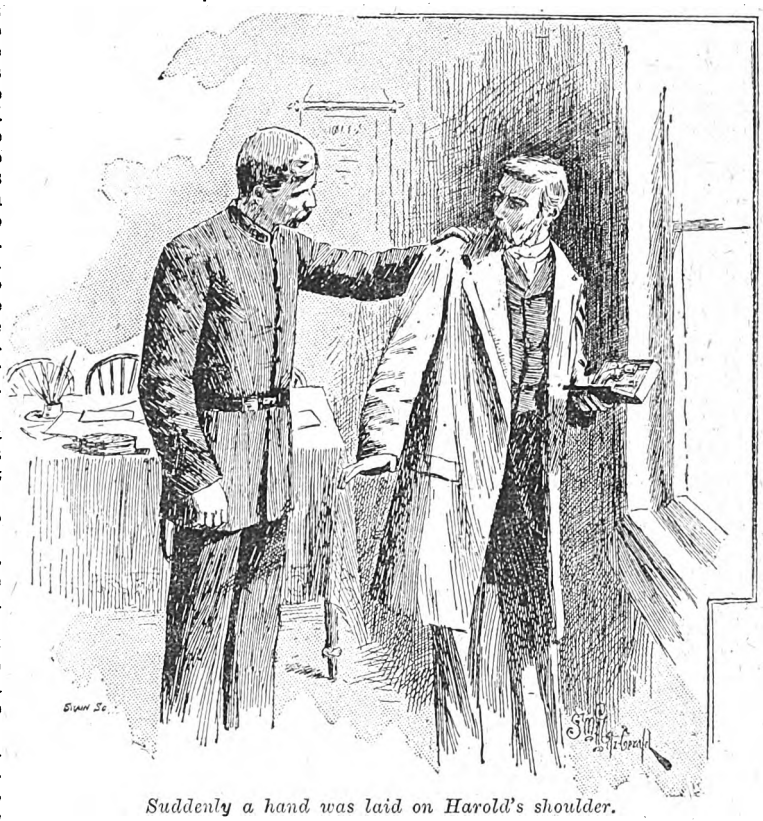
He stopped, terror-stricken. What new blunder had he been guilty of?

"Since when has Mr. Vere been absent from home?" asked the Coroner.

"We can easily find out by applying to his housekeeper or servants," he added.

This was true enough. A dozen people knew as much of Vere's disappearances as he did. "But oh!" thought Kenyon, "it is hard that I should be the one chosen by Fate to swear away my old friend's life!"

He resolved to say no more. Come what might he would no longer bear witness against Vere. He remained obstinately silent; and the Coroner adjourned the inquiry for a week. As he now had his finger on the clue he wanted, and had privately a good deal of sympathy for Kenyon, he did not take the extreme measure of sending him to prison for refusing to answer questions.



Suddenly a hand was laid on Harold's shoulder.

Next day's newspapers carried a report of these proceedings all over the country; and when the inquiry was resumed there was no lack of evidence. It was shown that the time of Jane Unwin's elopement exactly coincided with the time of Vere's disappearance; and—most fatal witness of all—Martin, the railway guard, came forward to tell what he had observed on the platform at Paddington.

Kenyon, who had returned to Darnport for the week, went up to town for the adjourned inquest. He felt as if he owed that much to the Coroner, who might have enforced his attendance in a very unpleasant way.

But he could not bring himself to enter the crowded court-room. He got a room upstairs, and waited there for the verdict.

Soon, terribly soon, it came——

"Wilful murder against Launcelot Vere."

And Harold Kenyon left the inn, feeling as if he had played the part of a traitor.

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CHAPTER X.

A Faithful Heart.

On the evening of the day when the verdict was delivered, two girls were sitting together in a small room in the upper flat of Wythecombe Rectory. They were Winnie Denvers and Katherine Dale. Winnie's bedroom had been turned into a kind of sitting-room, for there were few days when she felt strong enough to go downstairs.

It was a chilly evening, the day had been wet and gloomy, and a fire had been lit. The two girls sat before it, hand in hand, without speaking. They were generally silent, or all but silent, when they were alone together. Each had her own sorrow; and although Kate never spoke of hers, Winnie suspected it, and gave her an unspoken sympathy. Once or twice she had tried to make Kate confide in her fully; but she saw that the effort to speak would cost her friend too much.

"That's Mr. Vere's revolver, sir."

"The past cannot be undone," Kate had said once, with a look in her eyes that Winnie had never seen in any face before.

"No," said Kate decisively. "Better—" she stopped. "What does it matter?" she said, after a long pause. "We were not sent into the world simply to be happy."

Winnie was eager to say more; but the conversation was interrupted, and it had never been renewed.

Sitting there in the firelight Kate was wondering whether her companion's fate or her own were the hardest—to live in suspense as to the fate of one who is dearer than all the world, or to be forced into a loveless marriage, compelled to fly from what the heart hungers for.

A knock came to the door—a maidservant entered and put a card into Katherine's hand.

"For me! How can that be?" she said, as she took the bit of pasteboard. Then she flushed up, and said wonderingly: "At this hour! To have followed me here! I can't see him."

"It is not past—there is time yet to draw back," the younger girl had whispered.

"Who is it, Katie? Oh, Mr. Kenyon! You must see him—at once, Kate. Oh, go this moment. He may have news."

"There is little chance of that, I fear. If there had been good news he would have telegraphed. But if you wish it I will see him for a moment."

Katherine felt almost like a hypocrite as she said this; for although she felt that it was presumptuous in Mr. Kenyon to come after her to the Rectory, something in her heart cried out so loudly that she must see him, that she must hear his voice, if only for a moment, that she seemed to have no power to resist it. She moved slowly, but her feet longed to run; and Winnie, agitated and tearful, urged her to make haste.

Outside the door of the library—the room into which Kenyon had been shown—she paused, to obtain full command of her features; and in that moment of waiting she heard a sigh so sad and so profound, that it told her more of Kenyon's state of mind than he could have made known to her in hours of speech.

Softly opening the door, she went in. He was standing with his elbows on the mantelpiece, leaning his head on his hands. At the sound of her entrance he turned round, and smiled a little as he held out his hand; but his face, Kate noticed, was pale and haggard.

"You may be sure, Miss Dale," he began, "that I would not have intruded on you here, at this time of night, without some good reason."

"Have you news—of him?"

"Not in the sense you mean. But you know that Jane Unwin was found dead, and that an inquest was held?"

"Yes, we saw that in the newspapers. We are anxiously waiting for to-morrow's paper to see what the verdict is."

"I came here to-night to ask you to warn Mrs. Denvers not to let her daughter see the paper to-morrow."

"Why? What will be in it?"

"Do you think she—Miss Winifred—still cares for Vere?"

"I'm afraid there's no doubt of that."

"Then next morning's news will be dreadful for her to hear! Yet she must know it sooner or later."

"What is it?"

"The jury have found that Jane Unwin was—murdered—by Launcelot Vere."

"Great heaven!—You do not believe it?"

"Miss Dale, for days I have been asking myself that question. I cannot answer it. A month ago I would almost have staked my soul's welfare on Launcelot's innocence. I would have scouted the idea of such a thing being possible. But, alas! the proofs are so clear! They cannot have been manufactured. We know that Miss Unwin left Wythecombe suddenly, telegraphing to some one on her way up to London, and that she was met by Launcelot. They left the station together, and have never been seen since—never till the poor woman's body is found with her old lover's portrait next her heart, and his pistol lying at her side."

"She may have taken the pistol and shot herself with it!" cried Kate.

"That has been my sole ground for hope; but the doctors are very positive that the light clothes she wore would have been singed if she had fired the revolver herself. I am ready and anxious to hope to the last; but I confess that had I been on the jury I would have concurred in the verdict. We are not the first—I should say I am not the first—who has been ready to take an oath that a friend was innocent, only to find that the bitter truth was none the less true!"

"Are you speaking of Launcelot, Mr. Kenyon?"

Harold and Kate both started. It was Winnie. Kate had unintentionally left the door ajar, and they had not heard Winnie come in. Her impatience to hear what Kenyon had to say had driven her downstairs. Neither

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Harold nor Kate knew what to say to her. She read evil tidings in their downcast looks, but she boldly repeated her question: "Are you speaking of Launcelot?"

Still no one answered her, and she went on:

"For, if you are, I can only say this, neither of you knows anything at all about him. You have been trying," she continued, turning to Kenyon, "you have been trying to find out what has become of him ever since—ever since—" her lips trembled pitifully, but she mastered herself and went on—"ever since he went away. And what have you found out? Nothing! I don't blame you for a moment. I am grateful to you; yes, I am grateful, for I am sure you did all that any could have done. But you have not discovered what became of Launcelot. And in the meantime I am not going to think ill of him, or to listen to anyone who believes ill of him."

Harold and Kate looked at each other in wonder, and then back to Winnie. The slight fair-haired little thing stood before them. Her attitude was entirely changed. Her figure was drawn up, her eyes flashing indignantly, her small white hands clenched.

"Very well, my dear, we will wait for news," said Kate soothingly; and she stepped forward to take her hand and lead her upstairs.

A maidservant entered and put a card into Katherine's hand.

"You know something," she said, drawing back from her friend, and turning to Harold. "I am not afraid to hear it. What is your news?"

Harold threw an appealing look at Kate, and remained silent.

"Was it not because you have heard something, some rumour perhaps, about Launcelot, that you came here to-night?"

Then suddenly her manner became harder, more defiant than ever.

"Have you come from London?" she asked. "Possibly. Have you any news of the inquest? Tell me if you have."

Again Harold's eyes sought Katherine's for guidance. And this time they said: "Speak!" She felt certain that Winifred would never be better able to hear the dreaded word "murder" joined with her lover's name than she was at that moment.

"There was a man named Martin, a railway guard," began Harold. He paused.

"Yes?" from Winifred.

"He came before the Coroner, and said he had seen Launcelot meet Jane Unwin at Paddington, the day she left here."

"Yes?"

"And so the jury thought he must be responsible for her death."

"But she committed suicide, poor thing, didn't she?"

"I cannot say. The doctors declare that she could not have done so."

"But some one else may have killed her."

"Perhaps so."

"Or it may have been an accident."

Harold was silent.

"Don't you think so?"

"I'm afraid that is impossible," said Kenyon, almost in a whisper. For a few moments there was silence in the room. Then Winnie began to speak again, her breast heaving with emotion.

"And they think Launcelot is responsible — how responsible?"

"Miss Denvers, don't ask me. We may be thankful now that I did *not* succeed in tracing Vere."

"What! They think he *murdered* her?"

A smile half of amazement, half of contempt, lit up her face.

"And perhaps you think so too? What was it you were saying when I came into the room—that others who had been ready to stake their existence on a friend's innocence had been deceived? That was Launcelot you were speaking of, wasn't it? And you think he shot the woman?"

"I hope, I pray it may not be true; but what am I to think? The evidence——" He stopped. Better, he thought, leave Winnie to believe in her lover's innocence if she could.

"And this is a man's friendship!" she cried scornfully. "A thing that goes by reason, and evidence; it is rational, sensible. It knows nothing of faith. It leaves folly of that kind to women, I suppose."

Harold said nothing. He was amazed—amazed that this tender and delicate creature should be capable of attacking anyone as she was now attacking him. Her cheeks and eyes

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burned with indignation. She looked as though the other two had offered her some mortal insult. And every word she uttered cut Harold Kenyon like the lash of a whip.

"You forget," he said, stung by her sarcasm, "that he was seen with her at Paddington."

"The man told a lie," said Winifred calmly, "or he was mistaken. It doesn't matter which."

"I think it is quite possible that he was mistaken," said Katherine.

"Oh, Kate! Kate!" cried the girl, throwing herself into her friend's arms, while her overstrung nerves found relief in a flood of tears, "I have been longing to ask you if *you* really believe Launcelot guilty"—she shuddered now as she spoke the words—"of murdering poor Miss Unwin, and I didn't dare. Because I was afraid you might say that you *did* believe it. And then—then we couldn't have been friends any longer, could we? I couldn't really love anyone that thought Launcelot a murderer. But I have you still."

She was sitting now on Kate's knees, one arm thrown round her neck. She turned to Harold, her sweet blue eyes still swimming in tears.

"We are not quite so irrational as you think," she said, smiling through her tears. "Do you suppose I have not thought over every circumstance, and balanced one thing against the other, as well as you? But you give too much weight to details. You think too much of coincidences, which may, after all, be purely accidental. And you don't give weight enough to what you know of a man's character."

"I did and I do give great weight to Vere's character. He is the last man in the world I should have believed guilty of such a crime. Even now I cannot think that he is guilty."

"But you fear that he is guilty?"

Harold said nothing.

"And I know he is not guilty."

Winnie's tones rang out strong and clear. She looked from Kate to Harold and back to Kate, as if she had determined to convert them both to her opinion.

"I suppose you would say that if Launcelot eloped with Jane Unwin it must have been he that shot her. But I do not admit that for a moment. What I feel, is that although he might conceivably have been weak enough to run away with her, it is not conceivable that he could be wicked enough to take her life."

"And perhaps you think so too?"

"Launcelot to take the life of a woman, a woman who loved him!" she cried. "It is impossible. It is not true! Ah! He must be ill, very ill, or he would write to me. And if I were a man, I would find him. Forgive me!" she cried suddenly, laying her hand on Harold's sleeve, and looking up in his face with the frank, fearless gaze of a child. "It was so thoughtless of me to say that, when you have been working so hard in your friend's cause. But I suppose a girl thinks she must win when she fights for the one she loves. You know," she added, with a winning smile, "you know I am almost Launcelot's wife."

"Oh, Kate! Kate!" cried the girl.

CHAPTER XI.

A FALSE STEP.

IT was now time for Kate to return home; and Harold offered, as a matter of course, to walk with her as far as her mother's door.

The two set out together, and walked side by side for some minutes in perfect silence.

"Thank God she can still believe him innocent!" cried Harold, evidently referring to the girl they had just left.

"It will lighten the blow for her wonderfully," answered Kate. "But I wonder whether she is right in thinking that one *can* be as sure of anyone as she is of her lover. Is it true that one human being can rationally say of another, 'I am justified in refusing to believe, against any conceivable weight of evidence, that this man committed such a crime?'"

"In some cases," answered Harold, "such faith would be justified by the result. But very often, I fear, it would not."

"I suppose you are right," said Kate with a sigh.

They were only a few yards from Mrs. Dale's house, when they noticed a figure on the road before them. A step or two more, and they saw it was Paul Shenstone.

"Is that you, Kate? What made you so late? Your mother is getting quite anxious, and begged me to come in search of you."

"I will bid you good-night, then, Miss Dale," said Kenyon. "Good-night, Shenstone."

"Good-night, and thank you so much for bringing Miss Dale home," said Shenstone with elaborate politeness.

Kate laid her small gloved hand in Harold's for an instant, but said nothing.

Kenyon's footsteps died away, and the other two paced slowly on together.

Kate shivered, not from cold, for the air, though damp, was warm.

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"Did he bring any news?" asked Shenstone abruptly.

"The jury have found a verdict against Vere."

"Wilful murder?"

"Yes."

"I thought so."

"Paul, you do not believe him guilty?"

"I don't see how anyone can suppose that he is innocent, if evidence is worth anything. But it was not about that I wished to speak to you."

"Won't another time do, Paul? You said my mother was anxious."

"She is not so anxious as not to be able to wait while I have said what I have got to say," said Shenstone coolly. "It won't take long."

Still he paused for a minute or two, and Kate waited patiently.

"I don't like your seeing so much of that fellow Kenyon," he said abruptly.

Kate started. It had never occurred to her that Paul would be jealous, seeing that there had never been anything approaching intimacy between the young banker and herself.

She paused for a moment before replying. Then she said: "I do not think I have given you any cause for complaint. Mr. Kenyon was introduced to me in the ordinary way; and no one can say that he is not a person of good reputation. And I have seen very little of him. However, if you object to my seeing him at all, I shall drop the acquaintance. Of course," she added, "I don't mean that I shall deny myself to him, especially if he should ask me to help him in clearing his friend from the accusation he is lying under. Indeed, that is the only subject that has brought us together at all."

"Exactly," said Shenstone. "I don't think that is a matter you should be mixed up with in any way."

"I am not mixed up with it," said Kate, "except in the way of doing what I can to cheer poor Winifred."

"Of course she will have no more to do with Vere after this?"

"On the contrary, she persists that he is innocent, and considers herself as still engaged to him."

"But this is simply infatuation!"

"It shows great faith, certainly. And yet, I think she may be right. She must know best——"

"What nonsense!" burst in Shenstone. "As if a girl's fancies were to be weighed against facts! Of course she must take her own course, if her father is fool enough to allow it. But I object to your being associated in people's minds with her

It was Paul Shenstone.

"Fool that I am!"

and Kenyon as Vere's defenders."

"I understand," said Kate quietly, "I will do nothing to set myself up as either his defender or his accuser. And now I think I must bid you good-night."

They had been approaching the garden gate as they talked, and as Kate said these last words she opened the gate and passed inside, glad to have brought the conversation to an end without a quarrel, and without having absolutely promised not to see Harold Kenyon again.

Mrs. Dale was waiting, ready to open the door.

"I am sorry to be so late, mamma," said Kate, as she crossed the threshold; "but you need not have been anxious about me."

"I wasn't anxious, my dear. I knew one of the servants would see you home, or come to say that they had kept you over night at the Rectory."

"Didn't you say to Mr. Shenstone that you were getting anxious about me?"

"Mr. Shenstone? No. He called in the early part of the evening; and when I told him you were at the Rectory he went away, and I have not seen him since."

Katherine's lip curled with disdain as she went slowly upstairs. It was a small matter. Mr. Shenstone might easily have imagined himself to be saying that Mrs. Dale must be feeling anxious, or something of that kind. But Kate, who had an almost Quakerish scrupulosity in matters of truth or falsehood, felt offended and disgusted. Her mother's name had been brought in, without the least warrant, in order to make it appear that she had been to blame, when she had not in the least.

Meanwhile Shenstone was walking rapidly home, in a state of great anger against Katherine, Kenyon, and himself most of all.

"Fool that I am!" he cried out, clenching his fists savagely. "And the wedding day not fixed yet! I must apologise, eat humble pie; that always fetches women. I suppose I must give way about that fellow Kenyon—confound it. I may as well do so gracefully, for I see she would not obey me if I insisted on her not seeing him again. Well! She can hardly refuse now to fix an early day for our marriage, on the score of sympathy with Miss Denvers; that's one comfort;" and a peculiar smile flitted over Shenstone's features as this thought crossed his mind.

"I must see Kate to-morrow," he added to himself, "put myself straight with her, and, if possible, get her to fix the marriage day not later than the twelfth of next month."

(To be continued.)

IT IS NOT TOO LATE,

even now, to start reading "The Final War," in *Pearson's Weekly*. Every instalment is crammed with stirring incidents.

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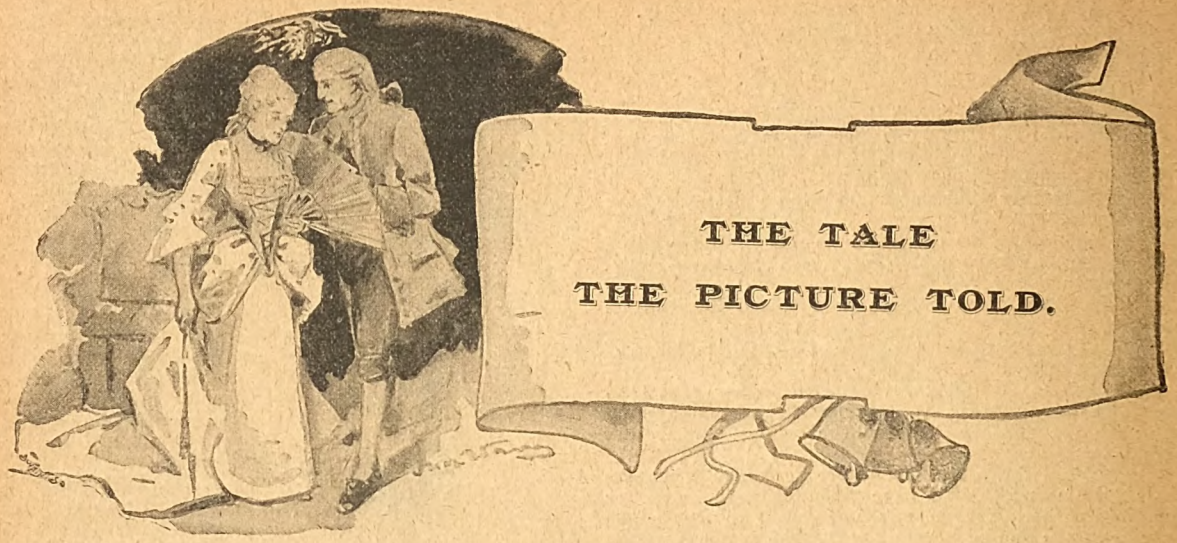

THE TALE THE PICTURE TOLD.

I HAD an adventure to-day. Can you believe that my diary is steeped in every page with the gloomy monotony of the last ten years? An adventure it terrifies me to remember, and yet it gives me strange thrills of joy—if it is joy. What experiences have I ever had of happiness that I should know the sensation when it comes?

"Happiness, content, pleasure!" I write the three words and look at them stupidly, wondering at their meaning, as if they were an unknown language. Are they not? Fifteen years ago my mother died, and two days afterwards my father blew out his brains because the bank in which all his money was deposited failed. It was a brave thing to do, to commit suicide, leaving me—a child of four years old—to find out what the world means by charity. I begged or starved, as the case might be, varying the programme by sobbing myself to sleep after being beaten.

When I was nine years old the hag who gave me a corner in a cellar for a bedroom, a crust for a meal, told me my uncle had come from France, and was going to take me away. Any change seemed glorious to me, and when two police officers took me to court, and I was formally identified as Editha Berri and as formally given over to the guardianship of my mother's brother, Gordon Willoughby, I put my hand in that of the stern man who claimed me, and actually imagined I was going to a better home than the corner of the dark damp cellar—a better guardian than the hag who had beaten me for four years. We came here.

Oh, merciful Heaven! what had I—a baby of nine years—ever done, to be brought here?

The house is immense, and I begged in a city long enough to know a big house when I see one. The grounds are extensive, and a high wall shuts us in on all four sides.

One grim woman keeps the rooms we occupy in order, and the garden and orchard run to waste. Two miles off there is a village, and five miles beyond that, a city.

Every week a man drives up to the gate from the city, and delivers the goods ordered the week before, taking fresh orders. And I notice that the name upon the packages is "Mr. Gordon," never "Gordon Willoughby."

My uncle taught me to read and write and gave me the key of the bookcases in the library, leaving me to finish my education or leave it unfinished, as I thought fit. There is a piano in the house, and I have learned to touch the keys and make a noise that pleases me. I wonder if that is music.

In the library there are about fifty novels, and I have read every one, and so I can picture the life other girls lead and contrast it with mine. In ten years I have never been beyond the tall iron gate that shuts me in this prison more than a dozen times. There is a stretch of seabeach beyond them, and a horrible line of cliffs overhanging the sea. I have walked there a few times, but I hate it! I hate the cliffs!

I think that is because of the picture. My uncle is a student and an artist, I suppose. He shuts himself up in his study all day, never coming to his meals, which are carried to him, while I eat mine in the kitchen with Anne. There, in his study, he reads and paints all day.

One picture was brought here when his luggage came, ten years ago, and was hung in the study, and I have seen him sit for hours and look at it with a glare in his eyes that was horrible to see.

This is the picture. Ugh! how I hate it!

In the very centre are the cliffs beyond the walls of this prison. Great cruel rocks rising from the sea, with a stretch of land at the top. Lying flat upon his face upon the highest rock, looking over into the hungry sea, is a man.

He is very handsome, with bright brown curling hair, and great blue eyes, and in his face is an expression of eager search—a look of terror.

Below him, holding to the rocks with torn, bleeding hands, and held by his clothing from the fearful fall that seems imminent, is a second man, quite out of the other's sight, under the overhanging shelf of rock. You can see that this one has fallen over the cliff, caught by his clothing to the ragged rocks, and then swinging under, holds on by his hands, quite hidden from the one above him.

And this second man is my uncle Gordon.

There is the same cruel face, narrow forehead, small mouth, large dark eyes. He is aged—now has long white hair and a heavy white beard, but the man in the

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picture is uncle Gordon, for all that, when he was young, and, in a cruel, stern fashion, handsome.

In his pictured face, too, is the same expression of malignant triumph I have seen there hundreds of times when he sat looking at the picture.

In one corner of this charming work of art, under the crest of an incoming wave, is the name, Gordon Willoughby, and a date twenty-five years old this year.

And this brings me to my adventure. It has been fearfully close and hot all day, and three or four hours ago I took my broad brimmed hat and went to the beach. I don't know why I walked to the cliffs, hating them as I do, but I did. I stood looking up at them from the beach, when I saw a man coming over the path leading to the sea, on top of the rocks. I do not often see people out there without scampering home, feeling how odd I look. But to-day I stood still and looked at the man, till he stopped and then lay flat on his face and peeped over the rocks, with his face as white as death.

I knew he would, because his face was the face in the picture, with brown curly hair and big blue eyes.

Yet the picture is twenty-five years old, and this man was younger than that, I am sure, though I do not see so many faces that I am a good judge of age.

I wonder what he looked for? I wonder if he has been twenty-five years seeking it? It gives me a feeling of wild terror to think of the picture, and then of the man I saw to-day.

He rose to his feet again while I stood staring at him, as I am sure no young heroine in any of my fifty novels would have stared, and then he sauntered off by the way he had come. How was I to guess he was coming down the path winding round the rocks to the beach? I never imagined he was near me till a voice close at my side said: "Pardon me!" and I turned to face him. I wonder what colour my face was? Green, I should judge by his cry of horror.

"You are ill?" he cried.

"No," I answered. "You startled me. We seldom see strangers in this out-of-the-way place."

He looked at me with a strange sort of pity in his blue eyes. Then he said:

"Can you direct me to a house that was called, years ago, Hilton Hall?"

I shook my head.

"I never heard of it. You had better ask in the village."

"I have done so. They told me I could see from the cliffs on old stone house, with a high brick wall around it. I can barely trace this place for the dense growth of trees. But, pardon me again, you came from the iron gate set in that wall, so I ventured to speak to you."

"I never heard the place called Hilton Hall," I said, "and I lived there ten years."

"The village people told me a hermit lived there named Gordon."

"My uncle."

"Gordon," he said, as if the name was familiar in his mind. "Well it is a common name."

I was about to tell him the rest of the name, and then paused, with the same terror clutching my heart that had seized it when I first saw his face. I wondered why?

He talked to me after that of the sea, and the views to be sketched near us, of which I knew nothing, and then he left me.

But he gave me a card with his name upon it, and asked me mine. I have the card here. The name upon it is: "Francis Hilton, Weasels Club, London."

Will he come again? Is it joy or fear that makes my heart beat so heavily, my hands so cold? I wonder if my uncle would look at the living face as he looks at the pictured one? If he did I should expect him to spring upon Francis Hilton, and tear him to pieces.

* * * * *

While Editha Berri wrote diligently in her diary, finding some relief from the dreary monotony of life even in the recording of her "adventure," Francis Hilton was walking briskly to the village. In the hotel there, he wrote a letter, and this was its purport:

"Dear Mother,—I think I am on the right track, but I cannot write much news as yet. I went to-day to the cliffs, and I am sure I found the spot. I knelt down and crept along, peering over the edge as if after twenty-five years the sea would give up its dead, or the rocks tell their secret.

"It is wild hope we are chasing, but I am sure to-day those dying words were more than mere delirious raving. Yet my clue is still faint. But I will tell you what I have learned.

"First, that ten years ago Hilton Hall was purchased by a man whose name is Gordon. That is curious—is it not? Gordon!

"Since he has lived there, no one outside of his household has ever seen his face. He sends his orders for food and necessaries to the city beyond here by a grocer's man, who has never been inside the gate, he tells me, but takes a written paper from an old woman and gives her the goods. You can easily understand that there are many stories told of this recluse. One man who was hired to unpack the books and furniture when the hermit took possession, describes him as a very old man, with white hair and beard and large black eyes that glare like a wolf's.

"To-day I was on the cliffs, and looking down upon the beach, saw a girl gazing up at me with an intentness that was very curious. She was the strangest figure I ever saw in my life, and I went down to look at her more closely.

"The path round the rocks brought me to her side unperceived, as she was facing the cliffs, and it came out upon the beach some little distance beyond them. She was still looking up at them—so absorbed, she did not hear me—and I could not help staring at her dress.

"It consisted of a long straight robe of brown cotton cloth, belted with a morocco belt, without collar, cuffs or one shred of trimming. Her hair, that is intensely black, hung in two heavy braids far below her waist, and upon her head was a broad-brimmed hat of the coarsest straw. Her shoes were of heavy leather, such as boys wear.

"When I spoke to her she grew so ghastly white that I was afraid she would faint, and in her eyes was a wild terror. Why should she be so afraid?

"After a little time she regained her natural colour, though she was constrained and shy. But she is gloriously beautiful. Think of beauty that could triumph over her hideous dress!

"With eyes as black as coals—large, deep eyes, fringed by long, silky black lashes—and with hair dark as a starless midnight, she has a skin as fair as your own, mother—and I never saw one more purely blonde than yours. There was no colour in her cheeks to-day, but I fancy they can bloom like twin roses. Her features are not small, but classic in regularity, and her mouth is simply perfect, grave or smiling, to show the rows of pearls the dainty little lips cover. She is tall and slender, but very graceful, and her hands are of rare beauty.

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"Her name is Editha Berri, and she is niece to the mysterious Mr. Gordon, of Hilton Hall. Does that help you at all?

"To-morrow I shall try to gain admittance to this enchanted castle that holds so fair a princess.

"In the meantime, mother, try to ascertain if he had a niece and if her name was Editha Berri."

There was more in the letter—chiefly the loving questions of a son to a dearly beloved mother.

Having sealed, directed and posted it, Francis Hilton strolled about the village, chatting with all who were so disposed, but adding little to his meagre stock of information about the recluse of Hilton Hall.

* * * * *

How many years may one live in a week? It is just a week since Frank Hilton came here, and when I sit and count the hours I have spent beside him they seem to cover more of my life than the whole nineteen years I had lived before he came.

Lived! No—no, existed, stagnated, fainted! I have only lived in this great, glorious week. Every day I have met him on the beach, in the shadow of the cliffs that hang over some strange mystery in his life and mine—a mystery I dare not yet touch, but which must be revealed. I know that; *I* feel it, but I dare not help to tear away the veil.

Every day he tries to enter here upon one pretext or another. Only to-day he told me he was born here—here in this room where I am writing, and he wanted to visit the spot, and I promised to ask my uncle's permission.

But I dare not! He will kill him for having the face he so hates—the face in the picture. I am so afraid of my uncle. He never has given me a kind word in all these weary ten years. Even the old hag who used to beat me called me "Honey" when she was good-natured. But my uncle rarely sees me, rarely speaks to me, and my name drops from his lips, cold and stern.

He has fed and sheltered me for ten years, so I suppose he does not actually hate me, and, indeed, he never glares at me as he does at that odious picture I hate worse than before since the blue-eyed man sprang to life.

I have an idea that my utterly hideous dress might possibly be replaced by something better, and yesterday I plucked up courage and asked my uncle if Anne might order for me a pretty dress or two.

He looked at me as if he would strike me in another minute, and cried:

"You are a pauper—you are a pauper! and you shall dress like one!"

I ran away frightened at his voice and those horrible glaring eyes, and I ran against Anne.

She must have heard, for she said: "Don't anger him like that again. And never ask a miser for more than he gives, or he may take even that away."

So he is a miser. Now, I think of it, I don't remember that I ever heard Anne say so many words at one time before. Are we growing talkative, I wonder?

Although I was so frightened yesterday I made another descent upon my uncle this morning.

Oh, how my heart trembles to think of it!

I went into the study, and after saying "Good-morning!" and getting no answer, said:

"Uncle Gordon, was this house ever called Hilton Hall?"

Ugh! It makes me shiver to think now of the dead-white ghastly face lifted from his book. But his eyes were like coals of fire.

"Why do you ask?" he said, and then I was most thankful that I had prepared the first lie I ever told.

"Because I found this in the attic," I said, and put before him an old primer, upon whose first page was written: "Francis Hilton, Hilton Hall."

It was only the reason I gave for asking that was a lie. I actually did find the primer, having made many voyages of exploration in the house during the last week.

But my lie was nothing to his, for, regaining his self-possession with a jerk, he said:

"I only bought the house ten years ago. I know nothing of its former possessors."

He bent his head over the book again, and I was creeping out, thankful to escape so easily, when he called me back.

"Editha!"

I never heard this name softly spoken by my uncle, but it was hard then as iron smiting iron.

I looked into his face—set and stern, white as death.

"I thought your life would preclude all vulgar curiosity," he said; "but since that distinguishing characteristic of your sex has risen in your heart, understand that it must be fed elsewhere. Any prying into my life, my house, my affairs, will be followed by your instant dismissal from all of them. I took you from the gutter, and I can thrust you back again. Go!"

And he would do it. A week ago I do not think the threat would have moved me. There is at least freedom in the gutter. Beggars get a kind word sometimes with the penny charity offers. But here what is mine but mere food and shelter? I do not think there is a beggar alive who would give her clothes for mine.

Yet I cling to this life now, to this home, because the beach lies beyond, and on the beach I meet Frank. He tells me to call him so. And never were softer syllables than his voice makes of the name Editha.

The world that was so sombre and gloomy to me is bright and glad when he speaks. I wonder if love has come into my life, as it came to the heroines of my fifty novels! Every one of the fifty had a lover. But then every one of the fifty was wonderfully beautiful, and the rich one had trailing silks and glossy satins to wear, while even the very poorest had dainty calicoes and white ruffles and ribbons.

* * * * *

"Dear Mother,—Will you think I am utterly mad if I beg of you to join me here and to see the woman I love, and try to throw some sunshine upon her life? I write it again—the woman I love—or, rather, the poor, friendless, desolate child I long to gather into my arms and comfort.

"I dare to write so to you, knowing your firm belief that marriage is a sacred meeting of heart in which no worldly consideration should be allowed to enter. We have talked of it so often, mother, that I know when I tell you I love Editha Berri that you will come to me and tell me how to win her.

"Just one little week has taught me the sweet life lesson and to her it has come as well. She is not versed in any art that will hide her heart from me, and she loves me. When you hear the story of her life you will not wonder. I beg of you to come and snatch her from it.

"It did not seem to me honourable to try to steal her away till to-day, when she told me her uncle had called her a pauper. If she is a pauper I *will* take her away. In the village she is considered the heiress of a miser's hoarded wealth. But her uncle himself informed her of her poverty.

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"Are you not glad we are rich enough to choose a pauper, if we wish, to share our home? I am. I will not tell you more until you come. Let me know when to meet you."

* * * * *

Three days more—oh, what dreadful days! All the mystery is explained, but at what a cost! Did I murder my uncle? I am alone in this room for the last time. To-morrow I am to be taken away to light, happiness and love. Let me write the story of these last three days.

To-day is Friday. It was on Tuesday I wrote here last. Wednesday was a glorious summer day, with the sunshine flooding everything, turning the sea to molten gold. I went out early, and Frank was on the beach.

In one hour I had ceased to envy my fifty heroines their silks and satins, their fine homes, balls and pleasures. For Frank loves me—loves me! In spite of my hideous dress, my want of early attraction, he loves me. He asked me to be his wife, and, strangest of all, told me his mother was coming to the village hotel on that same day to welcome me. Only yesterday he wrote to her, and to-day she telegraphed him to meet her by the train that comes to H—— at three o'clock.

So we arranged our plans. I was to tell my uncle that I was going to marry Frank Hilton, and walk straight out of the house to the beach, where at five o'clock Frank would be waiting to take me to his mother. He told me she would love me for his sake, and I thought my heart would break for joy.

I came home, determined not to speak to my uncle until just before five o'clock, so that if he was furious I would run away direct to Frank.

I opened the chest where I kept my possessions. In it I found one change of underclothing. I wonder what one of my fifty heroines would say to that. My one woollen dress and a big shawl Anne packed away in camphor. About my neck is a ribbon with my mother's wedding ring on it. Nobody gave me any more of her property and I was too young to take it. I do not know who gave me this.

I tied up the change of clothes in a towel, and wandered about the house till near five o'clock.

Then I went to the study. My uncle was reading—he always is reading. He took no notice of me till I mustered my courage and said: "Uncle Gordon!"

"Well!" he said harshly, as he was always harsh to me.

"I am going away."

His lips curled to an ugly sneer.

"Back to your native gutters?" he said.

"No; I am going to be married."

"To whom, may I ask? The grocer's boy is, I believe, the only person who has ever seen you."

"I am going to marry Frank Hilton," I said, and shrank back.

But he did not strike me; he did not speak. His eyes took their most frightful glare, rolled back in his head, and he gave a cry, such as I never heard, and fell headlong upon the floor.

Anne came to my screams—my terrible screams—and we lifted him and took him to the bedroom.

"Run to the gate! Scream to anyone passing to send a doctor!" Anne said.

I flew across the long path to the gate. Frank was there waiting for me. I only screamed: "Bring a doctor—my uncle is dying!" and then dashed back again, after seeing Frank start on a run towards the village.

Anne had loosened my uncle's collar and had tried to force brandy between his lips, but he was rigid and growing cold.

He was dead—quite dead. The doctor came, and before dark Frank came with his mother, but nobody could help my uncle.

Mrs. Hilton took me to my room—the room where Frank was born—but I know nothing of the long night. In the morning I saw a face like an angel's bending over me, with blue eyes like Frank's, and golden hair. Soft hands caressed me, a soft voice whispered: "My poor child!"

But I could not take comfort yet. I struggled to my feet and asked for Frank.

When the sweet woman had dressed me she led me downstairs to where Frank waited. I took his hand and dragged him to the study, where I tore open the shutters to let the sunlight fall upon the horrible picture.

"What does all this mean?" I screamed. "You are there—my uncle is there! Your name killed him! What does it all mean?"

"Is that your uncle?" Mrs. Hilton asked, pointing with a shaking hand to the man under the cliff.

"Yes. He was old—old, white-headed—but that is his face, and his name is there, under the waves."

Frank looked at the name.

"'Gordon Willoughby,'" he read in a strangely solemn voice.

"Thank God!" his mother exclaimed, falling into his arms and bursting into tears.

I stood quivering with excitement until Frank had quieted his mother. I was not accustomed to attention, to being considered, so I did not suffer as a more petty girl might have done. But I thought my brain would have burst.

After a time, that seemed a week to me, Frank put his mother in my uncle's armchair, and turned to me.

"Editha," he said gently, "twenty-five years ago my mother was married here—in Hilton Hall, and Gordon Willoughby, who had loved her, swore to be revenged upon my father, who had won the love he coveted. In those days, dear, this was a splendid home, and my father one of the richest and most popular men in the country. Just one week after the wedding day my father came to his home, white and awe-stricken, and from that hour was a changed man. Mother has told me how he became silent and sad where he had been the bright spirit of his circle of friends. He seemed ever to carry the weight of some terrible secret with him, and rarely left his home.

"Even my birth, one year later, did not rouse him from his gloom, and when I was but two years old he left his home and went abroad. We led a wandering life after that, until my father died, two years ago, in Paris. Upon his deathbed he told the secret that had stricken all gladness from his life.

"Upon that evening, a week after his wedding day, he met Gordon Willoughby upon the cliffs. They quarrelled, led on by the man who had vowed vengeance against Alice Hilton's husband, and from words they came to blows, and fought for life upon the cliff, each trying to throw the other over. At last my father shook himself free, and as he did so, pushed Gordon Willoughby over the cliff. From that hour he carried a murderer's inferno in his heart. And that was Gordon Willoughby's revenge," said Frank, pointing to the picture; "that he hid his miraculous escape from the man who would have given him all his wealth, his very life, to have known the truth.

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"But upon his deathbed some unexplained intuition told my father what to-day proves to be true.

"He told me the story and implored me to come here to Hilton Hall and try to gain some clue to the truth. Again and again he told me he believed Gordon Willoughby lived, though he could not give one reason for such a belief."

That was the story, in many more words than I have written down.

We went to the room where my uncle's still figure rested. The undertaker's men had shaved off his ragged white beard, had cut his hair close, and his face was calm and peaceful. It was the face under the cliffs in the picture, and Mrs. Hilton recognised it at once as the face of her old lover, who had so faithfully kept his bitter vow of revenge.

I think we all breathed more freely when we were quite at the other end of the house in a great vacant parlour, to which Frank and Anne carried some chairs and a lounge. Then how strange it was to be coaxed to lie down, to be covered with a soft shawl and caressed and petted, to have Mrs. Hilton kiss me, and her tender voice call me "daughter!"

Oh, could I mourn for the unloved dead, then?

In the afternoon a dressmaker came from the village and Mrs. Hilton ordered my mourning. A little later a lawyer came from London, having been sent for by Frank, after he found his address in my uncle's notebook, an hour after he died.

I was not called upon for much questioning, but the doctor and Anne were summoned to answer all inquiries about my uncle.

Then the lawyer told me my uncle had long, long before willed me his property, and that I was very rich—even richer than Frank.

So we are to live here, though the house will be made cheerful. In a year Frank and I are to be married, and Mrs. Hilton will teach me all things for his wife to know. She will take me to-morrow to her own home in London, and Frank will remain here till the workmen know what is to be done to renovate the house, and make it a home, not a prison. This morning, just before the funeral, we took the picture down from the wall, cut it into fine shreds, and burnt it in the open grate.

All my uncle's papers are packed up and taken to the lawyer's office till we are ready to send for them, so we can leave here when we will.

* * * * *

Just a year ago I left Hilton Hall. To-day I came back again, Frank's wife. I look in the long mirror in my dressing-room and wonder if the tall, stylish woman reflected there can be the brown-clad girl who ate her heart out here for ten years. Frank assures me it is the same, and I gladly believe him. W. A. Holcomb.

WITHIN AN INCH OF ETERNITY.

If you have ever paid any attention to American affairs, the name of Auburn cannot be unfamiliar; it has about the same significance in the United States as Portland has in England. You must not imagine Auburn as an immense gloomy prison, a single large building, but rather a whole colony of criminals, a metropolis of the miserable outcasts of society. Inclosed by enormous walls, which rise menacingly to a considerable height above the plain, are a great number of single structures, houses which contain the cells of the prisoners, the residences of the warders, barracks, hospitals, and workshops, all desolate and dreary, with here and there a bit of turf, a row of trees, a bed of flowers, like an innocent memory of childhood among the evil thoughts of a criminal.

Circumstances, which I will not weary you by recounting, had led me, after completing my education, to America, and after a brief time in New York I found myself prison-surgeon in Auburn, which, as perhaps you know, is in the State of New York.

I had charge of a part of the prison which contained the worst criminals, men, or rather human hyenas, to whom blood had ceased to be a very special liquid, as Mephistopheles terms it. Two, who were condemned to lifelong imprisonment in the institution, and were distinguished among the others by great bodily strength, craftiness and intelligence, had, in consequence of repeated bold and cunning attempts to escape, been placed under more rigid oversight than the rest.

I had incurred their special hate because I had once caused the discovery of several iron tools, which—Heaven knows how obtained—they had concealed under their clothing, and on another occasion discovered that they were shamming, when, on the plea of illness, they desired to be placed in the hospital, probably because they hoped to find the conditions there more favourable for their plans of escape. The scoundrels were separated and heavily chained, but nevertheless one morning one, and a few days later the other, vanished, chains and all, without leaving a trace. About a fortnight afterwards I went to Cayuga Bridge on some private business.

It was noon when I reached the end of my ride; and I gazed with delight at the sunlit landscape before my eyes. Cayuga Lake, one of those which, with Lake Erie, form the network of inland lakes in New York, lay before me in its peculiar loveliness. Between rugged, rocky shores, confronting each other like sullen foes, the long, narrow sheet of silver, extended its clear surface as if striving to reconcile the two enemies, who had stared defiantly at each other for centuries. Across the lake, which is about forty miles long, and, at this point, a mile wide, the railway trains run on an immense wooden bridge, a marvel of American enterprise, which has a station at Cayuga Bridge, an insignificant village.

My business was soon completed, and towards evening I set out on my way home. Are you familiar with the pleasure of a ride on a summer evening? Cayuga Bridge is surrounded by extensive oak forests, through which I had to ride a considerable distance. The huge, lofty trunks cast long shadows, and the tops rustled so softly that one rather felt than heard them. As I passed beneath these woodland giants, sweet memories of my far-off home stole into my heart.

Absorbed in thought, I loosened the bridle of my horse, which trotted slowly forward. I admired the bewitching blending of colours produced by the rays of the setting

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sun as they shone through the dense, dark green foliage, and seemed to kindle the edges of the leaves.

Suddenly I was aroused from my dreams by a rustling in the underbrush on both sides of the road. I seized my pistol and turned quickly, but at the same moment received a terrible blow, which deprived me of my senses. True, I opened my eyes once more and fancied I saw indistinctly, as in a dream, one of the escaped criminals bending over me, then darkness shrouded my mind.

It must have been late at night when consciousness returned. I opened my eyes and saw above me in the deep blue sky a radiant moon. A dull, heavy sensation in the back of my head made me try to put my hand on the aching spot, but I discovered that I was bound hand and foot. Gradually I collected my thoughts, remembered the attack by highwaymen, and a terrible foreboding, which made my heart stop beating, darted through my brain. I felt that I was laid across two sharp parallel projections, which pressed against me most painfully, and, listening intently, I heard far below me a faint splashing noise. There was no doubt—I was lying across the rails of the Cayuga bridge, bound, unable to move, with the terrible, certain prospect of being cut into three pieces by the next train.

I almost lost consciousness again. But I soon recovered my composure. Then I tugged desperately at my bonds till they almost cut my muscles, shrieked, and at last cried like a child. I tried to roll myself into a different position, and remembered that an incautious movement would hurl me into the silent waves of the Cayuga—bound hand and foot, motionless as a stone.

I shuddered and lay still. But not long. The light of the large, to me, fearfully, brilliant moon, the splashing of the water below, the wind blowing softly, then the deathlike silence again, rarely interrupted even by the distant note of a bird—all became unendurable and inspired me with unspeakable terror. And the rails! The rails! My senses tortured me. I could not escape them. The wooden beams of the bridge trembled almost imperceptibly from the washing of the water. I imagine I felt the approach of the train and my hair bristled; the wind sighed a little louder, I fancied I heard the dull panting of the engine, and my heart stood still, only to throb the next instant with such dreadful speed that the pulsations were almost audible.

There are some things which are totally incomprehensible to me; one of them is how I survived that night. One thought stood distinctly before my mind. I must endeavour to work myself into another position—if possible, get into the space between the rails—if I was not, perhaps, the next moment, to become the victim of the most agonising death.

And I succeeded! I strained every muscle, every sinew to the point of breaking. I writhed, I twisted, I panted, my head seemed bursting, and, after tremendous exertion, which appeared to me to last an eternity, though perhaps it was only moments, I found myself in the hollow between the rails.

Was I safe? I had not time to consider or rejoice in my new hope, for all my vital powers were concentrated in the single sense of hearing. In the far distance I distinguished, at first vaguely, then more and more distinctly, the regular, monotonous, dull noise which is produced by the engine of a moving locomotive. The awful silence of the night merged minute by minute into the still more awful, confused jarring sounds, the rattling and groaning, rumbling and panting of the locomotive, which was rushing forward at a mad speed. A thousand feet more, five hundred—and all the terrors of the infernal regions assailed me, but not a muscle moved; I lay as if turned to stone. I tried to shriek, but did not even hear my own voice; how should it reach those on the train?

Now, for an indefinite brief space of time, I fancied that I saw a bright light, a blast of hot air fanned me, then suddenly darkness shrouded me. I heard a thundering roar as though the very heavens were falling.

Close, very close, barely an inch above, the monster dashed over me—I was safe. Still half unconscious, I heard a deafening rumbling and clattering, and saw shadowy masses flit by; there was another moment of mortal dread—the hook of a chain which hung lower than the rest caught me, dragged me along a few feet, and finally tore a large piece from the breast of my coat, releasing me, then every object danced around me, the moon, the bridge, and the high bank whirled in a giddy maze above and below me and my senses failed.

When I regained my consciousness I found myself in my bed, with familiar faces bending over me. To make the story short, I had been picked up the morning after that terrible night by a signalman, recognised, and taken to Auburn. A violent fever kept me for a fortnight within the shadow of death, but my strong constitution conquered. When, after my recovery, I looked in the glass for the first time, I saw what traces those moments had left upon me.

ARNOLD REES.

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The following are letters which have been received in connection with these photographic enlargements:

Mr. E. J. Hallam, of 17, Godwin Road, Forest Gate, E., writes:

I beg to acknowledge with thanks the safe receipt of the enlargement of my child's photograph. I think it is only right that I should express my great satisfaction and admiration of the same. It is not only a marvellous likeness, but a really splendid production. Considering the small price you have charged, I must say I consider you have made a handsome gift to all those who availed themselves of your offer.

Mr. O. G. Quinn-Jones, writing from 2, St. Catherine's Terrace, Tenby, says:

I am exceedingly obliged to you for the very handsome enlargement of the portrait of my deceased brother, which I received this morning. It is, in fact, more lifelike than the original, and the most satisfactory work of the kind that I have ever met with.

Mr. W. G. R. Williams, Master Gunner, R.A., Dover Castle, writes:

I acknowledge with very much pleasure and an abundance of thanks, the magnificent pictures of my late father and mother, which came to hand safely on Friday last. They are "streets" beyond what I expected, being in every respect speaking likenesses. I have shown them to a number of friends who are unanimous in their praise.

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IN 1869, at the end of the Empire, a young man was seated in a kind of attic in the Rue Verte, Faubourg St. Honoré. In front of him, seated upon a chair, was the mistress of this dwelling. She was a woman advanced in years, with the real face of a sorceress. In truth she was a "chiromancienne," the name given to those who foretell future events by reading the hands of the clients who come to consult them.

The young man was holding out his right hand, and the old woman had the air of reading it as a banker reads his notes. Suddenly she stopped in her examination, looked her visitor in the eyes, and said, with an air of inspiration:

"Listen! Listen to me and answer!"

"I will, madam!"

"You are a widower?"

"It is true."

"Since six months?"

"Yes, madam."

"You are rich."

"I have enough."

"A million and a half francs."

"That is the amount of my fortune."

"You have no connections in the world."

"None at all."

"Very well, monsieur. Take heed of what I counsel you—never marry again."

Here the visitor could not help changing colour; ordinarily pale, he became pallid. Not marry again! Up to this hour, since the loss of his wife, he had never thought of such a thing; but he was still young—just entering his thirtieth year. What could prevent his forming a second alliance if he chose to, later on? Perhaps the interdiction so brusquely formulated by the sorceress irritated some secret desire hitherto hidden in the depths of his heart. He was seized with a feeling of revolt.

"Not marry again!" he said quickly. "Why not?"

"Because the lines of your hand oppose it, monsieur."

"But if I take no notice of it, madam?"

"If you do not obey the oracle," replied she, speaking as if she were at a loss for words, "well, *great misfortune will come to you!*"

He was not satisfied, and demanded that she should tell him more, at the same time showing her a piece of gold.

"That would be thrown away," the chiromancienne said. "If you were to offer me half your fortune I could not tell you another syllable."

She rose from her chair as if to let him understand that the *séance* was at an end. In spite of himself he was compelled to take his dismissal. Throwing a louis on the mantelpiece, he bowed and descended the stairs.

"Well, it is strange," said he, as soon as he found himself in the street again. "It is impossible to get that old woman out of my head, with her threats and her enigmatical talk; but it was equally ridiculous for one of my age and situation to come and ask an old woman about future events. It was a folly that can only be ascribed to a weak mind."

As he reached the Avenue Martigny, which leads to the Champs Elysées, feeling himself still a little shaken, he stopped a moment to regain coolness and to find an excuse for his folly in consulting the sorceress at all. He found it in things that he had heard when recently attending a soirée at the Turkish ambassador's. Among the guests there were several grand dames who had put all sorts of extravagances in fashion. Superstitious to excess, these pretty simpletons professed to believe in nothing, yet in truth had faith in everything. Each of them wore as a watch-charm a little pitchfork of coral to keep off the evil eye, and regulated their conduct by what they learnt from drawing the cards. They had spoken of the chiromancienne of the Rue Verte, and that she was endowed with the gift of second sight. One day the Empress herself and the Princess Metternich had gone to consult her, and returned with their heads full of the most astonishing things she had told them.

From that time on her reputation was established. She, the sorceress of the Faubourg St. Honoré, was as famous as Hone the spiritualist.

Now, in the run of success everybody in the fashionable world wanted to consult her, if only for five minutes. Our young man had but followed the example of the grand dames.

Tony Berthier was tall, thin, and decidedly *distingué*

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in appearance. He was also rich, and could walk side by side with the most elegant of that epoch, renowned for its ostentatious style of living and dress.

After the death of his wife—she left no children—he had to begin his youth, so to speak, when he had nearly reached the autumn of life.

But he was an idler, and seeing the world to keep from dying of *ennui* was almost a duty with him. In leaving him a great fortune, his parents, following the French fashion, thought it would be derogatory to his position for him to learn any kind of business. What need has a millionaire of doing anything? It is enough that he takes the trouble to exist. So Berthier went home to breakfast. He fared sumptuously, as a rich bachelor usually does.

Several of the daily journals were lying under his hand. To help him to pass the time he unfolded them one after another. They all related to what was passing in the gilded world of Paris, and the world of Paris at the end of the Second Empire was filled with scandal.

At the house of the nobility even you could hear of nothing but husbands who left their wives before the marriage was fairly concluded; of lovers demanding that ties be annulled; of engagements broken. It was "clear the decks," and a general helter-skelter on all sides.

Berthier saw a young woman, seated alone.

"Ah, well," said Berthier, sipping his pineapple-ice; "this is a pretty time we are living in. The old sorceress was right. Instead of grumbling at her I should send her a diamond as a present, with my thanks. If I should not marry again she has rendered me a service."

He lit a cigar and started for a walk on the boulevards, going first to the Madeleine, then to Montmartre, and then to the Boulevard des Italiens, and back again to the Madeleine. He was like a squirrel in a cage.

Restless and bored, he tried the club, and from there to the Bouffes Parisiens, where they were giving an opera by Offenbach. But there he yawned, and determined, as a last resort, to go to bed.

Finally he arrived at the conclusion that he was bored, because the general situation was too tame.

"To-day resembles yesterday," he said; "to-morrow will resemble to-day. If we only had some stirring event!"

One day at the club he was talking in this way when someone—a journalist—brusquely interrupted him.

"You want a stirring event, monsieur? Wait, you will have it!"

"What is it you say?" said Berthier.

"Nothing is plainer, monsieur. The war is coming. We are going to measure our strength with Prussia. I have foreseen it for ten months. But what does it matter? It will do us no harm to have a little fight with our neighbours. You will see," said the journalist as he went away, "war with Prussia."

Tony Berthier, like all the young Frenchmen of his time, saw it from a distance as only another name for victory, accompanied by rolling drums and sounding trumpets, decorated with flags, laurels, and flowers. He heard already the chime of bells and the songs of triumph. Alas! how soon these illusions were dissipated! The bravest soldiers in the world cannot conquer when their commanders are both treacherous and incompetent, and beautiful Paris—the capital of the world—surrendered.

* * *

Berthier was brave, and he loved his country. He went to the Loire and joined a company of riflemen as soon as the invader came.

He did his duty nobly, and was many times decorated for his bravery before the enemy. At last, in an engagement at Mars, he was severely wounded and sent to the hospital. It was months after this that he returned to Paris. The terrible days of the Commune had come. The city was filled with blood, tears, and grief. All the horrors of the civil war were before him, and he could still see the smoke of the guns that Frenchmen had trained upon Frenchmen.

In the midst of this tempest of ferocious passions he could not understand which side was right—which was wrong.

"Let them blame me if they like," said Berthier. "I will have nothing to do with it. What have I to do with their quarrels? I am rich, I am well established. I will be an egotist and take my ease."

This was in May. One afternoon in July of the same year, Berthier deserted the Madeleine—too many political

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He blew out his brains.

memories assailed him there—and went to smoke his cigar in the Tuileries Garden.

Berthier lounged along the Alley of Leaves, came to the Place de la Concorde, descended the steps, and in sheer idleness wandered round the grand fountain.

Just then Berthier saw a young woman, seated, alone and thoughtful, before the statue of Meleagre.

She was tall, fair, and elegantly dressed, and appeared to be about thirty years of age. Her costume was somewhat severe in style, as was proper for a person well born, after the great disasters of the past year. On her black hat was a tuft of purple plumes and a veil of black lace, and she had black gloves and parasol. Berthier approached a little nearer, the better to see her face. She was very handsome; her face was pale, but lighted by a pair of great blue eyes.

A few steps off he found the old woman who rented the chairs.

"Do you know that young lady?" he asked.

"No, monsieur; I know that she comes to the garden nearly every day at the same hour, and I have been told that she is a widow, which is evident from her dress."

"Widow?" said the idler; "widows are always the most fascinating of women."

He threw a silver piece into the hand of the old woman to pay her for her information, and continued his walk. At the end of twenty minutes he returned to the terrace, hoping to see the beautiful unknown again, but she had disappeared.

"I will return to-morrow," thought he.

The next day, as soon as he had finished breakfast Berthier hurried to the walk near the statue of Meleagre.

"She is there," he cried, his heart beating with joy.

"Monsieur!" cried the chair-renter, running towards him, quickened by the hope of another piece of silver, "I have information of the beautiful lady—shall I tell you?"

"Yes, speak," replied Berthier.

"Well, monsieur, she is about thirty years old, and in a modest but independent position. Her name is Clelia Puyremy, and she is the widow of a colonel of the Commune of last May. Her husband, having been taken with arms in his hands, was shot here on this terrace in front of that statue, and she comes here every day to pass a half hour at the same place."

"Hold, madam! Here is money for you!" said Berthier, and he hid himself among the trees.

Thus the "stirring event" for which he had longed, mingled with his love of adventure.

This beautiful woman was the widow of a colonel of the insurrectionists. He no longer wondered at the purple plumes and the black veil. But why did she come every day to visit the spot where her husband was shot?

"It is evident she loved the man. Can I hope to make her love me?" he asked himself.

Then he remembered the episode of the Rue Verte, and the prediction and warning of the sorceress. But although he resolved to think no more of his present folly, he came every day to the garden of the Tuileries in spite of himself, and each time he saw Clelia Puyremy and loved her more and more.

One day he could contain himself no longer; he managed to speak to her through the old chair-renter, and a friendly acquaintance began between them.

Tony Berthier had at last found a cure for his *ennui*. A little later they were married at the church of St. Roch, the widow having obtained from the official bureau a certificate of the death of her husband.

It was said there never was a happier union than that of Berthier and Clelia. In 1877 a little girl was born.

Three years rolled by; 1880 came, and in July of that year the armistice. Summer and autumn passed, and one morning at the beginning of winter, Clelia was alone, arranging her music. Suddenly a servant entered and said a poorly dressed man asked to speak to Madame.

"Let him enter," said she carelessly.

The visitor was Colonel Puyremy, her first husband. Contrary to all that had been told, he had not been shot, but had been thrown upon the pontoons of Brest, and afterwards carried to New Caledonia. Profiting by the armistice he had returned, and was there to claim his wife. He did not want money—he wanted his wife.

Clelia did not try to struggle with the fatality which had so cruelly met her. She left her little girl and a note of explanation for Berthier, and went away for ever. She fulfiled what she thought to be her duty.

That day Berthier was hunting in the environs of Paris. On his return he found the note. He read it, and, in a moment of despair, blew out his brains.

The prediction of the sorceress had been verified!

LE VIER.

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AN INDIAN DRUG

By Huan Mee,

Author of "The Czar's Diamond," "In Masquerade," "Alan Lindow's Wife," "Philip St. Voullé's Understudy," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

Estlin Godfry brings from India three bottles of deadly poison, with which his friend, Walter Shenfield, a chemist, experiments on a rabbit. Estlin's uncle, Joseph Monro, is about to marry Ethel Sedwicke, and should he do so, Estlin will no longer come into the estate. On the wedding morning, Monro is found dead in his room. Estlin goes to London and consults an old friend, Sidney Larrance. At the inquest it transpires that Godfry will benefit by his uncle's death more than anyone else.

CHAPTER VI.

The Verdict of the Jury.

There was a very crowded court upon the re-opening of the inquiry into the cause of the death of Mr. Joseph Monro, and some considerable excitement was evinced when the first witness was called and answered to his name, Zarto Slazar, and a tall dark Oriental entered the box.

The Coroner: "You are an Indian doctor who has had much experience in native poisons?"

Witness: "Yes, sir."

The Coroner: "You have examined the poisons contained in the bottles handed to you by the chemist, Shenfield?"

Witness: "Yes, sir."

The Coroner: "What do you find them to be?"

Witness: "I find them to be the most deadly poison known in India—a drug that is instantaneously fatal."

The Coroner: "There is no antidote?"

Witness: "Naturally."

The Coroner: "What are the conditions found in the body of an individual who has died from this poison?"

Witness: "They are identical with the state in which Dr. Hill has informed me he found the deceased."

The Coroner: "Is the poison a common one in India?"

Witness: "No, sir, the secret of its manufacture is only known amongst a certain set of fakirs."

The Coroner: "It would be difficult to obtain?"

Witness: "Exceedingly, because one would have to discover the sect itself and then find an unscrupulous man who would be willing to sell it."

The Coroner: "In your opinion then the late Mr. Monro met his death from taking poison similar to that inclosed in the bottles that Mr. Estlin Godfry admits having brought home from India?"

Witness: "I am certain of it."

The Coroner: "Have you experimented with the contents of the other two bottles?"

Witness: "Yes, sir."

The Coroner: "With what result?"

Witness: "I tried a single drop from one bottle upon a rabbit, and a drop from the other upon a dog, and in both cases the animals died instantly, without apparent pain."

The Coroner: "Thank you, that will do."

Estlin Godfry was then recalled.

The Coroner: "How many bottles of this poison did you bring home from India?"

Estlin: "Three."

The Coroner: "Can you prove that you only purchased three?"

Estlin: "No."

The Coroner: "Can anyone?"

Estlin: "No."

The Coroner: "You are aware that it is a very important matter that you should endeavour to do so?"

Estlin: "I am aware of that, but I can only give you my word."

The Coroner: "You cannot account for any possible way by which your uncle could have obtained possession of any portion of the poison however small?"

Estlin: "No, sir, he did not even know that I had it in my possession, and when I took the bottles from my private desk to take them to Mr. Shenfield the three seals were unbroken."

The Coroner: "Can you give us any reason why you purchased such a deadly drug?"

Estlin: "No, sir, unless it was a mere matter of curiosity."

The Coroner: "What did you pay for them?"

Estlin: "I gave the fakir a ring that I wore which had taken his fancy."

The Coroner: "Why did you take them to Mr. Shenfield on that Tuesday evening?"

Estlin: "Simply that being interested in poisons he might test them."

The Coroner: "Did he test the poison at your suggestion?"

Estlin: "Yes." (Sensation.)

The Coroner: "Why did you propose that he should close the shop?"

Estlin: "That we might not be interrupted."

The Coroner: "Now, Mr. Godfry, I ask you on your oath, was there any cause of disagreement between your uncle and yourself upon any point?"

Estlin: "You mean in regard to his wedding?"

The Coroner: "I mean upon any point."

Estlin hesitated for a moment and then in the straightforward manner which had characterised him throughout the inquiry, replied:

"Two years ago we had a very slight misunderstanding."

The Coroner: "That was before you went to India?"

Estlin: "Yes, sir."

The Coroner: "Was it the cause of your leaving England?"

Estlin: "Partly."

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The Coroner: "What was the nature of the quarrel?"

Estlin: "It was not a quarrel—it was a difference of opinion."

The Coroner: "I must ask you to be more explicit."

Estlin: "I was desirous of marrying a lady to whom my uncle objected, and he gave me an opportunity of visiting India in order to forget the connection."

The Coroner: "Then this disagreement was the real cause of your visit to India?"

Estlin: "No. It had been a long cherished desire."

The Coroner: "By the death of your uncle before the marriage, and therefore before signing his new will, the whole of his property is, I believe, by a former will left to you?"

Estlin: "That is so."

The Coroner: "You were aware of this?"

Estlin: "Yes."

The Coroner: "You are therefore a greater gainer by his death now than you would have been later?"

Estlin: "In mere money I derive more, but the whole of the money is as nothing against the loss of a man who had been more than a father to me."

The Coroner: "Thank you, I do not think I need trouble you further."

The only other witnesses called were the servants of the household, who testified to the general goodfellowship which had existed between the uncle and the nephew.

The Coroner then proceeded to address the jury upon the whole case. He said that in all his experience a more distressing event it had never been his duty to inquire into, but he trusted that what at the present appeared to be a terrible mystery would eventually be cleared up. The jury had to consider, in the light of the whole of the evidence that had been laid before them, how the deceased met his death, and that resolved itself into one of three alternatives, either suicide, misadventure, or murder. To his mind, any idea of suicide was not tenable, for the few events of the unhappy day seemed to point to a man at peace with himself and all the world, easy in his financial circumstances, happy in his approaching matrimonial relations, and with a bright and prosperous future stretching out before him. Was that the kind of man to commit suicide?

And further, if he had desired to take his own life, would he have chosen a time like that and so plunged into grief and mourning the woman whom they must believe he had fondly loved? Death by misadventure seemed less likely still. There was no poison found in the wine in the study, the doctor testified to the death having been instantaneous, and yet they found no receptacle that could have contained poison and a most searching investigation of the contents of the desk had revealed nothing but private papers, cheque books, and such like possessions of a business man. The tourist tickets for the honeymoon journey were lying ready upon the table and a guide-book to the English Lakes was also found. There was nothing therefore to point to misadventure.

The only alternative then, was the black and ugly one of murder. Yet they could find no trace of any enemy. Mr. Monro had been a man esteemed and respected by all who knew him, open-handed and generous to a fault. In considering the probability of murder they had to look for motive, and motives generally divided itself into one of two things—revenge, or money. He could not think it was revenge for where could revenge arise when a man had no enemies? Then it must have been a murder for the most sordid of all reasons, for money.

He did not desire to lead the jury in any way, but simply to coldly recapitulate the facts. Those facts disposed in his mind of any theory of suicide or accident, and left only murder, foul murder. The evidence pointing towards murder was unfortunately very strong. They must bear in mind that by the new will Mr. Monro had made, and which he intended signing the very day that the drug of the poisoner took his life, diverted the bulk of his fortune into another channel than that of the former will.

They must also bear in mind that there had been a disagreement between himself and his nephew, which was the cause, or partly the cause, of the latter leaving for India, and perhaps, while still smarting under what he construed the injustice of his uncle's action, he purchased the fatal drug. Who should say? Then they find Mr. Monro himself proposed entering into a matrimonial alliance that would of necessity lessen the fortune to be left to the young man, and, for all he knew, rear up an heir to usurp his place.

The evidence of Shenfield, the chemist, told them of the visit of Mr. Godfry on the evening before the day fixed for the wedding, and of the experiment to prove the virulence of the poison, and the fatal results upon the rabbit. They had heard the opinions entertained by Mr. Godfry as regarded suicide, poisons and antidotes, and that gentleman could but give them his uncorroborated word that he brought home only three sealed bottles of poison. That Mr. Monro died from the effects of such a poison they had the sworn testimony of the Indian expert.

Those were the facts that presented themselves to his mind. Far be it from him to attempt to sway the jury but he felt it was his duty to dwell upon this series of circumstantial facts and then leave to their careful judgment and consideration the whole of this perplexing mystery. If they found that there was reasonable ground to assume Mr. Monro might have died from misadventure they would, of course, return that verdict. Painful as it might be, they would equally return a verdict of suicide if they could find anything to justify that view, but if after considering everything they were forced to believe that Mr. Monro met his death by the hand of another, then in the exercise of the duty that they were summoned to perform, they would as Englishmen do that duty and return a verdict accordingly.

The jury, after a brief deliberation, returned a verdict of "Wilful murder against Estlin Godfry," who, amid a scene of the wildest excitement, was committed on the Coroner's warrant to take his trial at the next assizes.

CHAPTER VII.

Hoping against Hope.

Estlin Godfry was committed for trial for the wilful murder of his uncle, Joseph Monro, and there were not wanting many who thought him guilty. It would not be saying too much to assert that nine-tenths of the population of Maythorn had already decided upon his guilt, and were equally certain as to what the result of the trial would be, but against them all there was the one staunch, true friend, who, with indefatigable energy, worked for the defence.

The best legal talent available was secured on behalf of the unfortunate young man, and from morning to night, and far into the night itself, Sidney Larrance laboured and thought. Confident in the innocence of his friend, he was equally conscious of the damning chain of circumstantial evidence that had wound itself around him. No intuition seemed possible in such a case as this. The facts marshalled themselves in such regular order, from the quarrel of the uncle and nephew two years ago to the sudden and awful death of the former on his wedding-day, that it seemed as though fate itself had decided that Estlin Godfry's race was run, and that what promised to have been a long life and a brilliant career was to end like the life of a malefactor, in the cold grey light of an October morning, with the tolling bell for a man not yet dead, the scaffold and the rope.

Heaven, it was terrible! To think that an honest man should be done to death, hanged like a dog, because there was no one to prove he was not a murderer. The voices of the crowd prated of the "circumstantial evidence." Yes, circumstantial, purely circumstantial, but yet how awfully it all fitted, fitted with horrible accuracy, and the learned counsel for the prosecution would take the pieces as a child

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takes a dissected puzzle, and join them together until the whole thing was complete, and then——

Haggard and worried, Larrance sits alone wondering and pondering over this mystery, and never getting on much further towards the solution. The more he considered it, the deeper he probed it, the more it pointed to the conclusion that the crowd had adopted already—Guilt! Guilt! Guilt! Estlin Godfry was doomed. There was no hope of a miracle to clear the man who Larrance knew was innocent, no hope, no hope.

For the twentieth time since he commenced to try and discover some clue to the mystery, Larrance goes down to the village and talks the matter over with Shenfield, who is as anxious as Larrance himself to discover some means that may save Godfry, for he cannot disguise from his mind that the evidence forced from him at the inquest must have gone a long way towards influencing the jury to return the verdict that they had.

"You are certain," said Larrance, "that no one could possibly have tampered with the bottles after you locked them up?"

"Only too certain," the other mournfully exclaims.

"And the third bottle was utterly destroyed?"

"Utterly; the night was chilly and I had a rather larger fire than usual. That bottle and the paper with which I wiped up the spilt poison I myself threw behind the fire. It is useless to thresh this out again and again, there must have been some other poison somewhere."

"But where? You do not suspect Godfry?"

"No, Heaven forbid, but this poison was the poison that killed Monro, therefore there must have been more."

"Ah!" the exclamation from Larrance is so sudden that Shenfield is startled.

"What is it?"

"I have a gleam of hope yet."

"Speak man, speak."

"What became of the poisoned animal? Could anyone have obtained the body and extracted sufficient poison from it?"

"Impossible, no one except Godfry and myself knew of the experiment, and Monro was dead the next afternoon, besides I buried the rabbit myself."

"Did you look if the ground had been disturbed?"

"No, of course not, the idea never occurred to me, and besides the quantity used was so minute it would have been impossible for anyone to have extracted sufficient poison from the body."

"You remember the spot?"

"Perfectly."

"Let us see."

They adjourned to the far end of Shenfield's garden, he pointed out the spot, and after a few turns of the spade, the box containing the rabbit was unearthed. It had never been disturbed, and the last shred of hope in the minds of both vanished.

Larrance then sought out the Indian doctor, who, courteous and obliging, could give no different view to that he had already formed. No other opinion than that he had sworn to in the Court, Joseph Monro had died from an Indian drug, the very drug that Estlin Godfry had brought to England.

For hours Larrance pored over books and records of circumstantial trials, read and re-read until the very printed lines swam before him. Then through and through the evidence of the witnesses at the inquest and ever ended with the same result. It all pointed to one man only, his friend, his innocent friend Estlin.

An interview with the bereaved lady who was to have been Mrs. Monro only strengthened his confidence in the innocence of Estlin. Miss Sedwicke shared in the belief, and her sorrow at the untimely death of Joseph Monro was intensified by the horrible suspicion attaching to the man, who, as she said, would to her have ever retained the position he had held in Merton House, the adopted son of Joseph Monro.

No, there was no light, not a glimmer, not a spark; it was an awful mystery, a dense impenetrable blackness with but one possible end. The dock, the condemned cell, the sudden, awful, ignominious death!

They were powerless, utterly, completely powerless. Waiting as one waited for an annihilating blow, knowing that it was certain, that unless something should spring as from the very stones of the streets themselves and speak, there was no chance for Estlin.

Never was there a harder worker in a forlorn case than Sidney Larrance, never did man worry and strive and fret his heart out as he did but all to no avail. The days went on. How they seemed to fly. The dawn came and the sunset followed and yet no nearer hope. Never! never! and daily the trial drew closer.

And Estlin, what of his frame of mind. At first the horror of the whole thing seemed as a dream, from which he would awaken, but as each day went on and nothing ever lessened for a single moment the fearful accusation hanging over him, he grew pale and thin and weary. He could not sleep, but paced up and down half the night through until sheer weariness of body closed his heavy eyelids for a space and then the terror of his dreams awoke him to living wretchedness once more.

Could it be possible, he asked himself a hundred times a day, that fate would let this wild chain of coincidences, this mesh of circumstantial facts, rob a man of his life, throw a net around him that his fellow creatures would believe him guilty of the crimes of murder? murder for money. Horrible, impossible! No, no, they could not think that, no human heart could believe that he would slay his benefactor and yet the world's records of crimes had shown still greater villainies. But Providence, Providence would intervene and prove him innocent; surely, surely it would not let an innocent man suffer. Suffer, and such a penalty. The last penalty of the laws of man. Death!

No, something would arise, yes, something, something. He would sleep and hope.

That was his safety, innocence, and so he dozes to sleep and then the cruel dreams tear his brain once more, and he wakes shaking and trembling as the words seem to ring in his ears. "Hope not, hope not, the innocent have suffered before now. Thy name, too, is written on the scroll of Death."

CHAPTER VIII.

Guilty or Not Guilty?

It is the last day of the trial. The day upon which the result of five days' continuous hearing of evidence will be made known to the world, and Estlin Godfry let loose a free and innocent man, or, in the terrible language of the sentence of the law, be condemned to be "hanged by the neck until he is dead."

Within the densely crowded Court suppressed excitement is at its height. Every inch of space is packed with a throng which holds its breath and strains every nerve so that not a single word shall be lost; while in the midst stands the prisoner, pale but collected, meeting his sentence before it is pronounced. He feels there is no escape, that he is doomed.

For five days the brilliant counsel for the Crown has examined and cross-examined, brought forward this witness and that, and bound a chain of damning guilt about the prisoner, every link solid, and ringing with truth, every link welded within another until there can be no escape, the perfect circle is formed. Day after day for five days has the council for the defence endeavoured without avail to find a flaw in even one of the links, only to be driven back by the inflexible action of the Crown, which "desires not to win a victory and mete out vengeance for the sake of public opinion, but simply to press the full weight of a crime upon the one who has committed it." Now the whole case is over, and as the shadows deepen the Judge arranges his

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robes about him, turns over the leaves of his notes, and leans forward to commence his summing-up.

There is a death-like hush, every eye turned to the man who is about to address them, every mind wondering what form this summing-up will take. In the popular language, will it be "for" or "against" the prisoner, the murderer! They already call him "the murderer." After all, a trial is a waste of time when an impartial British public can settle a case almost without troubling to hear the evidence. The Judge looks towards the jury, and commences; his first words, in the view of the public, settling the fate of the prisoner.

"Gentlemen," he says, "I am no upholder of a colourless summing-up. It is my duty to lay the complex details of this case before you, and without endeavouring in any way to sway your impartial judgment, yet to do so in a manner that you may find yourselves assisted in forming a clear opinion as to the value of the evidence which has been placed before you. Before all things I would urge you not to be led away by questions which do not immediately bear upon the case, but to judge the facts coldly and clearly according to the laws of the country and influenced in no respect by sentimental or emotional evidence. Though in the eyes of the world, in the emotions of the body, it may be infinitely more horrible for a man to take the life of one who has always been his benefactor, yet in the eyes of the law the question of murder is not affected by any such influences, and I would ask you, in dealing with this grave charge, to cast from you any thought of the relationship or connection between the man before you and Joseph Monro.

"Then again do not allow any anxiety to find the wretch who could have been so heartless as to wreak his vengeance upon such a day as the murder occurred, bear in the slightest degree with you, for it is better that many murderers should for ever escape earthly justice than that one innocent man should be done to death."

The judge pauses and a murmur of suppressed applause breaks the silence for a moment, and all eyes are turned towards Estlin Godfry who, with his hand resting upon the ledge of the dock, follows breathlessly every movement in the Court.

"The prisoner, Estlin Godfry," the Judge continues, "is charged with the murder of his uncle upon the morning of the Wednesday the nineteenth of August last by means of a poison quite unknown in England, and instantaneous in its effect. He was the last to leave his uncle, and the time that elapsed between his rejoining his friends below and the finding of the body of the deceased gentleman was, as far as can be ascertained, barely five minutes, so that the horrible suddenness of the calamity clearly pointed to a poison the effect of which was to cause death like a lightning stroke. A poison of this kind, we are informed by an expert upon this subject, is absolutely unknown in England, although reputed to be more or less common in Eastern countries. How such a poison was brought to this town has been fully placed before you by witnesses for the prosecution and admitted by the defence.

"The prisoner himself has stated that he purchased three bottles of this most virulent drug in India, and brought them back to England. Two of those bottles you have had placed before you, and the third, on the oath of a witness who was called for the prosecution, and not the defence, was utterly destroyed. It is for you, in the impartial carrying out of your duties, to come to a conclusion as to whether those three bottles were all that the prisoner brought home, or whether there were others, for unfortunately the defence has been unable to call a single witness to prove that those three bottles were all the prisoner ever possessed.

"That is a matter you must weigh fully in your minds, leaning neither to vengeance or to 'giving a man the benefit of the doubt,' for I would urge you as men of honour, to act only upon what you feel to be the facts, and not to assume or deduce upon so solemn a matter as life and death. There can be absolutely no doubt that the murdered man was killed by poison either from one of the two bottles before you, from the bottle that was destroyed, unfortunately by an avowed friend of the prisoner, or from a fourth, the existence of which can never be proved, for experts have given you full evidence that such a death could only be caused by the administration of that one drug. You must also decide whether in your honest opinion it is the act of an innocent man, and moreover one not particularly interested in scientific studies to be in possession of such a deadly poison.

"But again I would urge you not to be hasty in your conclusions, as a man may purchase a revolver or a rifle without meditating a crime, so too may a man be in possession of a deadlier weapon without evil intent. As for the motive to the crime, if we accept the view that one man will kill another for the greed of money, and unfortunately the annals of crime show only too many examples that such is the case, then a motive is put boldly and clearly before you by the prosecution. Had Joseph Monro lived another hour, the prospective income of the prisoner would have been reduced from ten thousand pounds a year to one. A great motive to many, but against this you have to consider one important fact that the prisoner, although he might have the love of money common to all mankind, was in no great straits for it. He had no financial difficulties to negotiate, no overwhelming burden of debt to conceal, no disgrace to fear. He lived well within his means, had a large sum to his credit, and if he committed the crime could only have done so through a cold-blooded desire for potential affluence. A great and terrible deed for the most sordid motive.

"Much has been made by the prosecution of a quarrel which occurred two years ago between the prisoner and his uncle. A quarrel in connection with a youthful entanglement which was the cause of the prisoner leaving England. This quarrel is frankly confessed by the defence, and treated as a matter long past and forgotten. It is for you to decide, gentlemen, whether this is so, or whether this quarrel had long rankled and become at last the incentive to the crime.

"A very large number of witnesses have been called by the prosecution, who have proved beyond doubt the fact that the prisoner was the last to leave his uncle, only a few moments before his death, that he had the poison in his possession, and that he was well aware of the provisions of his uncle's new and old wills, and all those facts are admitted by the defence.

"Experts' opinion, and even that of the prisoner's friend, Walter Shenfield, the chemist, place beyond doubt the fact that Joseph Monro was killed by this identical poison. That is practically the case for the prosecution, the possession of an almost unknown poison, which caused the death of the deceased man, and a strong motive for his death existing at that time. The defence on the other hand has scarcely called a witness, and certainly none other than to prove the cordial relations existing between the two men, and the financial position of the younger, and, contenting themselves with a slight cross-examination, have relied upon a series of cold arguments and statements. As a defence in such a case it seems perhaps peculiar, but admitting as they do the possession of the poison, then unless they could prove that the prisoner only purchased the three bottles, the line of defence adopted is the only course open, and although an absence of witnesses need not necessarily mean a weak case, it must be regarded as calamitous that nothing could be brought forward against the evidence of the prosecution beyond a series of deductions as to the probable action of a murderer under a given set of circumstances.

"The main point laid before you in the course of the defence is, that had the prisoner contemplated the committal of the deed he would not have taken poison, which no one was aware he had in his possession, and shown it to a friend; and the natural assumption is that unless he had some very special reason for doing so he would never have

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taken them from his room, and certainly never shown them to a living soul.

"Then again, the defence says, had he contemplated such a deed, would he not have carried it out when he was alone with his uncle, and not waited until discovery was almost certain? He was always with his uncle, the poison was to his hand. You are asked to discover why he waited until such a moment. Was it, as the Crown suggests, that it was only on that very day, in the private interview with his uncle, only then that he discovered his true position? And did he, as the prosecution suggests again, make a point of showing the poison in his possession as a daring plan of escaping suspicion? A plan daring even unto madness. It is for you, gentlemen, in the righteous and honourable discharge of your duties, to discover whether these rash, one might almost say insane, acts bear testimony for or against the prisoner.

"Whether the doings of Estlin Godfry in connection with this drug indicate criminal stupidity, an abnormally far-seeing vision, which even considered the probability of this trial, or an innocence of all intent to harm, are questions which can only be solved by you, and upon your decision rests the grave and fearful question of life and death. Then we have the opinion of the faculty that a death so sudden, so fearful, would have been put down at once by a physician as heart failure if it had not been for the fact that Doctor Hill, the medical attendant of the deceased man, whose evidence you have heard, was absolutely certain that such a death could not have taken place. But, gentlemen, was the prisoner unaware of that? Was it upon that idea that he based his action? Was it upon that assumption that he was so open in his doings in connection with the poison? Does this explain actions which have been characterised as insane?"

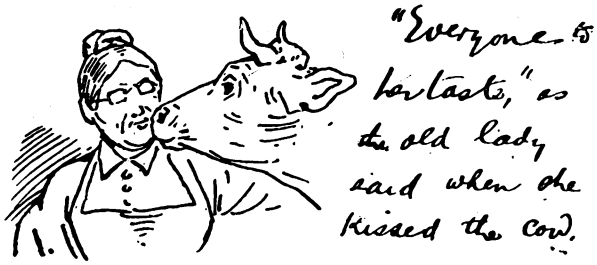
The Judge closes his book and leans back in his seat.

(To be concluded.)

RESULT OF THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

OF the hundreds of papers sent in for THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM, which closed on May the 25th, not one was wholly correct. Mr. R. M. Shipstone, of 126, Oakfield Road, Penge, S.E., headed the list with a total of 9½, and to him, therefore, has a prize of One Guinea been sent. Nine shillings has been added to the remaining prize of One Guinea, and this thirty shillings has been divided equally amongst the next ten competitors. The following are their names and addresses:

T. Gowland, 12, Tavistock Road, Harlesden, N.W.
L. W. Judd, 2, Alfred Villas, Stanton Road, Barnes.
F. Bessant, 15, Eton Place, Falmouth.
E. T. Goodson, 91, High Street, Standish, near Wigan.
T. Mason, Hawkhead Terrace, 31, Seedhill Road, Paisley, N.B.
G. M. Hollis, 47, Dartmouth Park Hill, N.W.
Miss Way, Curraghmore, Shanklin, Isle of Wight.
J. R. Trail Hill, 3, Merchant Street, Peterhead, N.B.
A. H. Hamilton, 43, Dalmeny Road, Tufnell Park, N.
Mrs. Witson, 482, Duke Street, Glasgow.



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RESULT OF PICTURE PUZZLE COMPETITION.

No. 6.

54	20	7	84	25	72	33	38
35	14	18	57	49	86	41	39
31	5	55	73	8	80	50	43
13	62	10	66	36	23	28	68
3	53	88	82	19	42	40	6
45	59	71	63	48	15	19	22
78	70	34	30	46	60	83	11
51	16	87	28	17	12	26	74
24	2	37	81	29	77	44	56
58	29	75	9	09	4	02	27
76	12	1	47	64	69	32	52

A VERY large proportion of those readers who entered for the Picture Puzzle Competition (No. 6) announced in *Short Stories* for May 23rd succeeded in putting the squares together correctly. It has been decided to award the prize of £10 to the competitor who forwarded the neatest correct solution, and the fortunate person is L. Shead, 19, St. Thomas' Road, Finsbury Park, N.

The twenty readers whose names appear below have each been sent a gold-plated pencil-case as a consolation prize for the correctness and neatness of their attempt:

Miss A. Hughes, 86, Fairbridge Road, Upper Holloway, N.
E. E. Wilson, 37, York Road, Walthamstow, Essex.
A. E. Bowles, 35, Weston Street, Bradford.
J. St. Clair, 29, Shelgate Road, Wandsworth Common.
T. O. Perring, "Glencoe," 38, Brunswick Square, Herne Bay.
Mrs. E. Davis, 13, Barbican Terrace, Barnstable, North Devon.
M. G. Morgan, 2, Tan Terrace, Berriew Street, Welshpool, Montgomeryshire.
Miss E. Mee, Burlish House, Bendley Road, Stourport, Worcestershire.
Bertram Newcombe, Green Bank, Penketh, near Warrington.
A. Grigg, 23, Church Street, Edgware Road.
Mrs. Baird, 9, Bowhill Terrace, Edinburgh.
F. White, 1, Ludgate Hill, London.
M. Mungall, 1, Adelaide Street, Helensburgh.
J. Baker, 4, Argyle Street, Darwen, Lancashire.
J. Cooper, 50, Queen Street, Peterhead.
Miss Capner, 42, Frances Road, Handsworth Birmingham.
W. Binmore, The Cottage, Lyncombe, Torquay, Devon.
S. Small, 18, High Street, Cardiff.
J. Cross, 34, Bentley Road, Kingsland Road.
M. Macnab, Perthshire Club, George Street, Edinburgh.

OWING TO PRESSURE ON OUR SPACE THIS WEEK WE ARE UNABLE TO FIND ROOM FOR THE KEY TO THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM, THE RESULT OF WHICH IS ANNOUNCED ON COLUMN ONE. IT WILL APPEAR NEXT WEEK.

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THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM

No. 6.—NEW SERIES.

TWO PRIZES OF A GUINEA EACH.

BELOW will be found the sixth batch of ten problems in the new series of THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM. Two prizes of a Guinea each are offered weekly to those competitors who answer correctly the greatest number of these problems.

Consolation Prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

RULES:

1. All solutions to be written clearly on one sheet of paper.
2. Do not write the questions; simply put the numbers and the answer against each.
3. Each set to contain the £100 coupon (found on second page of cover) for the current week.
4. All attempts to be in by Monday, June 15th.
5. Mark your envelope "GYMNASIUM, NUMBER 6."

(51.) WORD SQUARE.

1. Stern.
2. A particular breed.
3. An image.
4. To improve.

(52.) The first letter in the word forming the solution to this problem is found in "sock" but not in "shoe," the second in "brown" but not in "blue," and the remainder as follows:

In "rum" but not in "whisky."
In "prim" but not in "frisky."
In "order" but not in "neat."
In "arms" but not in "feet."
In "nation" but not in "crowd."
In "conceit" but not in "proud."
In "iron" but not in "slack."
In "opening" but not in "crack."
In "plunder" but not in "loot."
In "shout" but not in "hoot."

(53.) If *A* commences to write with an ordinary pen at the rate of 90 letters a minute, and *B* commences to write with a fountain pen at 103 letters a minute exactly 5min. 50secs. afterwards, what time will elapse before *B* has completed the same number of letters as *A*?

(54.) The following, when reconstructed, forms a readable sentence: The enemy of a broken ambulance abandoned by two waggons, halfway at an heap of spoils and its wheel the caisson are thrown up three dying waggons and the muskets and horses; for a hill at a crest two more weary knapsacks more men; with the foot off, or fearful and hill away

(55.) If H=7,
P=½,
O=2,
L=59,
What word on this page has the greatest numerical value?

(56.) MIXED VERSE.

Het oolepd si a uqderdaup 'stath racilypnilp riha,
It's wetvel ot rontefeu cinseh goln nda yevr yearnl ruaseq.
It merdins em fo a daly's fumf that's lobstered pu no geps,
It's revy englhty hirs'swe nda vitabrdebea gels.

(57.) The words defined below, when placed one on the other will form an hour glass, and the centre letters, read downwards, will spell a synonym for "settlement."

1. A botanical expression.
2. Burial.
3. Terrible.
4. Swindle.
5. Writing fluid.
6. G.
7. A beverage.
8. Full of lumps.
9. Deadly.
10. Totalling.
11. In a frightful manner.

(58.) DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

The initials read downwards
And finals read upwards,
Spell a word signifying,
"Particular stress of voice."

1. A Roman knight.
2. Plain clothes.
3. Sanctimonious.
4. A wild beast.

(59.) Make an anagram on the following sentence:
GYMNASTICS ARE GOOD.

(60.) How many (1) k's and (2) f's are there on this page.

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Curious Experiments

IN

CORPULENCY.

"A Mr. Russell, author and specialist in obesity, has experimentally tried the effect of administering large doses to moderate lean persons of his well-known herbal discovery, which is so marvellously effectual in reducing superfluous fat, with the result that there is not the slightest alteration or diminution of weight recorded, thereby proving conclusively to our minds that it is only the unhealthy adipose waste tissue which is destroyed, for after dispensing a few fluid ounces of his remarkable vegetable compounds he succeeds in destroying the diseased fatty mass at the rate of from 2lb. to even 12lb. in seven days. There can be no ambiguity about it, for any persons can test this for themselves by standing upon a weighing-machine. He explains that all lean persons carry a certain amount of fat necessary for the natural production of heat in the body, but Nature has only stored up her requisite stock in the healthy system, which she most zealously guards, and thus declines to part with an ounce to the persuasions of Mr. Russell's vegetable tonic, however immoderate the dose may be, which testifies abundantly to the fact that it is only a chemical solvent of insalubrious adipose tissue. There is no doubt that the inventor of the composition must have possessed a profound vegetal knowledge in selecting this simple but peculiar combination.

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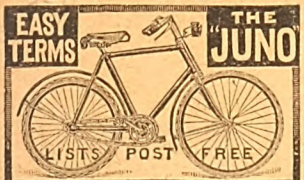

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Miss Roberts, "Brooklyn," Spotland Road, Rochdale, says: "I am 21in. round waist—before taking Your Pills, 27in." Mrs. Cox, "Hazelhurst," Brondesbury Road, N.W.: "The last supply reduced me 14lb. in month without change of diet." P. Bendelow, 59, Dorset Street, Bolton: "Your Pills greatly reduced my weight." H. I. Cooper, 97, Somers Road, Southsea, says: "Your Pills reduced me 2 stones." Mrs J. Maskery, of Shirley, Derby: "I have lost nearly 3 stones in weight." Miss Nappey, Wood Lane, Headingley: "I have lost 18lb."

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PEOPLE WITH BRAINS SHOULD TURN TO PAGE 666.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 390. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 20TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

Worth a Guinea a Box

has passed into a proverb
expressive of universal approval
concerning a medicine of rare value.

This Notable Verdict,

justified by a sale of 6,000,000 boxes yearly,
must secure the confidence of sufferers
in all climes and countries,
and
ever-widening fame
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Are supplied Direct from the Originators of the **HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES** for Ladies, viz., **JOHN NOBLE Ltd., The Largest Firm of Costume Manufacturers in Existence,** who consequently have the Best Facilities for producing **Better Value than any other Firm of Costumiers.**

TWO GOLD MEDALS AWARDED.

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Model 458, as illustrated, is a charming mode in the John Noble Cheviot Serge, consisting of full wide Skir and smart Bodice, prettily trimmed with fine military braid and finished fancy buttons. Saddle and sleeves lined. Price **10/6** complete. Safely packed and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra.

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Write for patterns, also "Illustrated Book of Costumes," containing numerous other Designs. Please mention *Short Stories* when writing.

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ALL SUFFERERS from INDIGESTION, LIVER COMPLAINTS, WIND ON THE STOMACH, BILIOUSNESS, SICK HEADACHE, PALPITATION OF THE HEART, etc.,

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Of all Chemists, at **1s. 1½d.** and **2s. 9d.** Post Free for Price from PAGE WOODCOCK, Lincoln.

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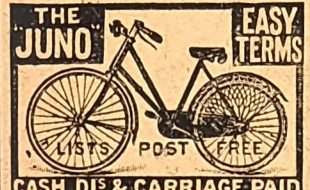

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Beware of the many imitations.

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Pieces for mending sent with all Suits.

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PEARSON'S

£100

COUPON.

No. 25

June 20, 1896.

S.S. S.S.

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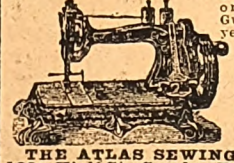

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SHORT STORIES

Edited by C. Arthur Pearson.

No. 390.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending June 20th, 1896.

A Strange Destiny.

I DIED twenty-five years ago, and, although my form is scarcely ethereal, I am as effectively non-existent as if I had been comfortably ferried over Styx and slumbered ten feet below the earth's surface. It will be necessary for me to explain that my name is, or was, Charles Conyngham, and my vocation that of a Continental messenger of Her Majesty's Foreign Office. In so remarkable a manner did I disappear, that in all probability the secretarial department at Downing Street, in conjunction with their neighbours over the way at Great Scotland Yard, still regard it as an unsolved mystery. In vain may they search, for I have ceased to exist; my personality has been lost for the past twenty-five years.

In 1871, England was obliged to exercise some ingenious diplomacy towards the newly-formed French Republic, and consequently in the middle of the year I was making two and even three journeys to Paris each week. Constant travelling like this soon wearies the most experienced, especially when arriving in London in the morning, only to return at night. The French, German, and Italian railways were to me as familiar as the Strand or Regent Street, for in ten years of Continent-trotting my brain had become a Bradshaw in itself, and I think I had seen all the so-called "sights," so delightful to the untravelled. A long journey to the Austrian or Turkish capital was very much more to my taste than the wearying monotony of the "Dover-Calais route," and I began to be heartily sick of it, as during the month I had been to Paris no fewer than thirteen times.

One August night, though excessively tired, I was compelled to set out again, and left Charing Cross by the mail train. Besides carrying important dispatches, a bag had been intrusted to my care which I knew contained a large sum in notes and gold, and which I had instructions to deliver to the British Ambassador. I was alone as far as Dover, but when I alighted on the pier the wind was blowing hard and the rain descending in torrents, indicative of "dirty" weather outside the harbour.

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"Calais boat this way, sir!" The words sounded above the disconsolate comments in English and the staccato sounds in objugatory French, so I retraversed the wet gangway, and soon had my precious bag placed in a position in the saloon where I could keep a watchful eye upon it.

Arriving at Calais soon after midnight, I entered the refreshment room and made a hearty meal, until the unwelcome words *"En voiture pour Paris"* were shouted. Then I went out, and selecting an empty first-class compartment, bade the porter deposit the bag, and, wrapping myself comfortably in my travelling rug, settled down for the remainder of the journey.

I dared not sleep whilst this quantity of gold was in my possession, and, fatigued as I was, I managed by dint of great effort to keep myself awake. It was always possible I might be watched and followed by thieves or emissaries of political societies; therefore, a loaded revolver reposed in my pocket ready for any emergency.

Few people were travelling that night, and I was fortunate enough to have the compartment to myself until we ran into Abbeville. Then there entered two well-dressed Frenchmen, who scrutinised me rather closely, and sank into the opposite corners of the carriage. Seldom I feel uneasy about my fellow passengers, but I confess that, as I regarded them, a shadow of distrust, of impending evil fell upon me. Instinctively I felt for my revolver, and assured myself it was in readiness if required, for somehow I was certain these men had been upon the channel boat, and were following me with an evil purpose.

But they sat opposite one another, smoking, and occasionally indulging in conversation, though never once turning towards me, and keeping their faces concealed as much as possible from the pale flickering ray of the carriage lamp.

As the train sped on, I became more fully convinced these men meant mischief. I looked at my watch, and found that in twenty minutes we should be due at Amiens, and determined to change into another carriage there. Patiently I sat gazing out of the window, watching the first grey streak of dawn break over the distant hills, and waiting for the next stoppage, when I suddenly felt a terrible blow upon the top of my skull. I remember no more! All was blank!

* * * * *

A burning, excruciating pain like the pricking of a thousand red-hot needles in my brain, a feeling that my eyes were being gouged out, and my temples beaten with hot irons. It was the most horrible torment I have ever experienced, yet I was gradually coming to, struggling out of what seemed to be a half dream, half stupor. Slowly the terrible throbbing in my head abated, and I found myself seated in an armchair in a handsomely furnished, but unfamiliar drawing-room. It was dimly lighted by tiny lamps, and gazing round in astonishment, I noticed a spacious fernery beyond, which looked like a mermaid's cave in the depths of the sea, so dense was the mass of greenery and so soft the splash of the miniature cascade.

My first thought was of my dispatches, and I felt for my pouch; but it was not there! Had I been robbed? Placing my hand on my chin, I was startled to find that I had a long beard plentifully besprinkled with grey, though yesterday I was cleanly shaved! And my bag of coin, where was that? I struggled to my feet, and, as I did so, my figure was reflected in a long mirror. I staggered backwards in amazement; for last night I saw a sprightly young man of thirty, but now I saw my hair was thin and grey, and my face so wrinkled and altered that I could not recognise it as my own.

Where was I? What could it all mean? Whilst these thoughts were passing through my mind, I espied a hand-bell, and tugged at the pull. My summons was quickly answered by a sharp-featured young man, who was evidently not a servant.

"Tell me, who brought me here? Whose house is this?" I asked impatiently.

The man gazed at me apparently in blank astonishment.

"I—er. You're not well, sir, I think. This is your own house."

"My house! And who are you, pray?"

"I am your secretary; but I—I'll return in a moment," he replied, and, evidently much terrified, he disappeared as quickly as if he had seen a phantom.

I had no time to reflect upon the mystery of the situation before there entered a tall, voluptuous looking woman, of what is called the Junoesque type, in evening dress, and ablaze with diamonds.

"Why, what have you said to Hallett? You've quite frightened him," she said, laughing. "How is it you are not dressed? You remember we promised to dine at Creswell's to-night."

"I—I don't understand you, madam," I gasped, for my brain was in a whirl.

"What's the matter with you? What has happened?" she cried in alarm. "Don't you know me, Rose, your wife?"

"My wife! No; I have never seen you before. This is some trick. Where is my bag of money?" I said in perplexity.

The look of distress deepened as she said:

"Calm yourself, my dear. You are not well, and must have advice."

"I want no advice," I replied. "I must resume my journey to Paris at once. Where are the clothes I wore, and the dispatches?"

"I do not know what you mean," exclaimed the woman who called herself my wife. "Your mind must be wandering, Frank."

"That is not my name. I am Charles Conyngham."

"No, you are under a delusion, dear," she replied in a softer tone, evidently intending to humour me. "You are Frank Godstone, and I am Rose Godstone, your wife."

"When and where did you marry me?"

"In Melbourne, eight years ago."

"In Melbourne. And where are we now?"

"This is our country home at St. Kilda, in Victoria. Is there anything else you would like to know?"

She said this with a smile, as if half inclined to believe I was joking.

"I married you eight years ago, you say. Then what year is this?"

She laughed mischievously as she replied:

"Come, Frank, this is not the first of April, so all this nonsense is out of place. You know well enough it is 1896——"

"What!" I cried, feeling myself growing rigid with amazement. "Yesterday was twenty-five years ago!"

I was certainly wide awake and sensible; but that I was myself I began to doubt, and at last came to the conclusion that I was not. I struggled to comprehend the situation, but utterly failed. How I came to be in Australia, the husband of such a wife, the owner of such a mansion, was a deep, inexplicable mystery. I felt

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light-headed, for this horrible suspense, and these unfamiliar surroundings were goading me to frenzy.

"There must be some serious misunderstanding between us, madam," I said earnestly. "I am not joking; for I certainly have not set eyes upon you before this evening, and am utterly at a loss to know who or what I am."

The woman who called me husband regarded me with a look of terror, as if she had suddenly become convinced of the truth of my words. Her face blanched, and she would have fallen had I not caught her and laid her upon a sofa. I rang the bell, and the maid-servant appeared.

"Your mistress has fainted; call someone to her assistance," I said, and, leaving the room, proceeded to explore the house from garret to basement. It was a splendid modern mansion, furnished with taste and elegance; and I found, on looking out of the windows, it was surrounded by well-kept lawns and clumps of fine old trees, now illumined by the pale moonlight, and transformed into a scene almost fairy-like.

Presently I was pacing the terrace, rapt in thought. The stars shone, the night wind sighed softly through the trees, and the air was filled with the subtle perfume of roses. How well I remember leaning upon the stone balustrade, gazing away to where the lurid reflection upon the sky denoted the distant city of Melbourne, and trying to account for my novel surroundings.

Utterly unable to realise the memorable journey to Paris had been made twenty-five years before, for it seemed but yesterday, though my aged appearance, my beard, the fact of my marriage, and my opulence, all combined to confirm the assertion the fainting woman had just made. But the thought of the lost money, and undelivered dispatches, troubled me most. In vain I tried to recount my actions on that night I left London; but, beyond the remembrance of the terrible blow I had sustained, I could recollect nothing. The anxiety was distracting, and as I paced the terrace with quick, impatient steps, I knew that if some solution of this horrible mystery did not soon present itself, I should go mad. I had a presentiment of insanity, and shuddered at the thought of the terrible derangement which hung over me as a Damoclean sword.

Suddenly I heard a footstep, and, turning, confronted the man who called himself my secretary.

"Layton, the manager of the Waljeers, has just arrived from Ballarat, and wishes to see you on important business, sir," he said.

"To see me! What for?"

"He desires instructions regarding the Waljeers claim. They have struck the lead at last, and the yield of gold is so rich that he advises you to float it as a company in the Melbourne market at once. Shall I bring him to you?"

"No," I replied. "Leave me to myself. I—I have not the slightest idea of your meaning."

"You must be unwell, sir," the man replied. "Surely you know Layton, who used to manage your mine at Poowong, and who is now in charge of the Waljeers?"

"I don't know him, and I have no desire to make his acquaintance. Send him away," cried I.

For a moment the man hesitated, then, muttering in an undertone, retired into the house.

It was not long before a maid-servant appeared, saying:

"Mistress would like to see you in the drawing-room, sir," and I obeyed the summons.

On entering I found the woman who called me husband seated upon a lounge chair, and near her stood a short stout old gentleman in a frock coat, and wearing *pince-nez*.

"Ah, my dear Godstone," exclaimed the latter, greeting me effusively, "how are you this evening?"

"I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance," I replied stiffly.

"Not know me? Come, come, think. Don't you remember Doctor Stanborough?"

"No, I don't."

The woman glanced significantly at him as he advanced towards me peering intently into my eyes.

"What have you been saying to your wife?" he asked abruptly.

"Saying? Why, the truth!" I replied. "She calls herself my wife; but I have never seen her before. Yesterday I was conveying some important dispatches between London and Paris, when—well I hardly know what happened; but I believe two ruffians stunned me, and I knew no more until I awoke this evening to find myself in a strange house, and claimed as husband by this lady. I believe there's some confounded trickery somewhere, and perhaps you can explain the whereabouts of the dispatches and money."

The doctor did not reply, but turning to her said gravely:

"Madam, this is very, very sad. I am afraid your husband's mind is affected."

"You are mistaken," I cried vehemently. "I am as sane as yourself; but if this horrible mystery is not soon elucidated, I feel I shall go mad."

"You are certainly not yourself to-night. We must see what treatment we can give you," said the doctor.

"I want none of your nostrums, sir. All I require are my dispatches and money. I am told I am in Australia; if so, I must return to England immediately and explain my absence."

"Doctor, my dear husband seems under the delusion he has been robbed of some important documents," explained she anxiously.

"I am under no delusion, madam," I said rather hotly. "All I desire explained is how I came to be here."

"Monomania, evidently," the doctor exclaimed in a low voice. "It develops frequently into the most violent forms of madness, and he will have to be kept in seclusion and closely watched."

"Understand me," I said angrily, "your fears as to my sanity are groundless. I believe I have fallen a victim to a vile plot; but I tell you I am being mistaken for some other man. I am Charles Conyngham of the Foreign Office, London."

"Very well, my dear fellow, very well," the doctor replied, placing his hand upon my shoulder. "We will believe it, if you wish. Calm yourself; remember your wife is weak and nervous."

I turned dejectedly away, for all my efforts to make myself understood had only been met with incredulity by the idiotic soft-spoken old doctor, who evidently believed that I was mad.

My position became more singular every moment, and in distraction I strode out into the grounds and plunged into a tall wood of dark gum-trees. On and on I walked, heedless of where my footsteps led me, until at last, tired out, I sank upon a felled trunk and gave myself up to another mental struggle.

All was silence, save for the weird croaks and screams of the night birds, and the faint rustle of the leaves overhead. The cool wind fanned my heated temples with

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such a soothing effect that I fell asleep. The morning sun was penetrating the thick foliage when I awoke and made my way out of the forest. Without much difficulty I retraced my steps to the house, only to become more intensely puzzled. My *soi-disant* wife was too unwell to leave her room, and I roamed aimlessly about the place, seeking to discover something—I knew not what.

One room I entered was evidently a study; my own den, possibly! Glancing at the books, a few choice paintings, and the row of telephones, I seated myself at the littered writing-table. Turning over the papers before me and examining them, I saw they related to mining enterprises and transactions involving large sums. Many of the letters and memoranda were unmistakably in my handwriting, but the signatures were "Frank Godstone," and the letter paper bore the heading "Great Poowong Gold Mines, Office, 296, Collins Street, Melbourne." My eyes fell upon a calendar and I saw I had not been deceived; it was the year 1896.

From the doctor's words on the previous night, it seemed clear that if I remained I should be placed under restraint as a lunatic, so what should hinder me from returning to Europe, and endeavouring to find out what befel me on that midnight journey? At the thought of funds I rose, and searching the drawers of the writing-table, discovered a cash-box. A bunch of keys was in my pocket, one of which opened the box, and eagerly counting the contents, I found nearly three hundred pounds in gold and notes. This would suffice for the journey and with great joy I transferred the money to my pocket.

In haste I wrote a few lines to my mysterious wife, informing her of my intentions, begging her not to follow me, and promising to return as soon as I obtained the information required to restore my peace of mind.

Calling Hallett, my secretary, I gave him the letter, with instructions not to deliver it at the sick woman's room until the evening; then gathering a few things into a hand-bag, I left the house. The next train bore me to Melbourne, and that same evening I was on board a P. and O. boat steaming out of Port Phillip.

From the first I was beset by terrible anxiety and fear lest I should be recognised, for though a victim to circumstances, I was, nevertheless, a delinquent, and I knew not into whose hands the undelivered dispatches had fallen, or what complications had ensued thereby.

On my return to London, however, I soon became assured that my appearance had changed beyond recognition, for on various pretexts I conversed with men who had been my intimate associates, none of whom now claimed my acquaintance.

The task of tracing my past career was fraught with many difficulties, and it was in Paris that I discovered a clue to the mystery. While searching the file of the *Figaro* for 1871, I found that on August the fifth, the night mail from Calais to Paris, while approaching Amiens, ran into some trucks, and was completely wrecked, seven persons being killed and twenty injured. But there was also enacted a terrible tragedy, for it appeared that in a first-class compartment were two men, one having among his baggage a strong leather bag, containing a large sum in English notes and gold. Both received severe blows about the head in the collision, but one, in order to obtain possession of the money, took advantage of the confusion immediately following the accident by shooting his fellow traveller dead. The murderer was making off with that portion of his booty that was portable when he was apprehended and conveyed to Paris.

Here was another complication! I could not be the murderer, neither could I be the murdered man, yet the bag of gold referred to was evidently the one intrusted to my care.

Eagerly I scanned the papers of the following days and found reports of the examination before the *juge d'instruction*, and subsequent trial of the accused for wilful murder. He was stated to be young and well dressed, though conducting himself strangely, refusing to give his name or any account of himself whatever, and preserving an immutable silence throughout the many days the proceedings lasted. The trial must have been a celebrated one, judging from the reports; and the prisoner, through a slight discrepancy in the corroborative evidence, escaped the guillotine, and was sentenced to transportation for life to the penal settlement of New Caledonia.

Here the information ended; and though I searched the copies of the papers for two years subsequently, I found nothing more. It was clear my only hope lay in an interview with this mysterious convict, who might enlighten me as to my connection with the tragic affair; and to this end I sought out an official in the Prisons Department, who was once well known to me. He had since retired into private life, and in common with others, did not remember me. Representing myself as an English solicitor endeavouring to trace a next of kin, and offering to pay handsomely for information, I prevailed upon him to seek an interview with the chief of the department, and ascertain where the man who had been sent to penal servitude could be found.

A few days later, when I called, a memorandum was placed in my hand certifying that after remaining five years at the settlement, prisoner No. 7,403, committed for life for murder, had escaped in company with Auguste Durand, another convict, by means of a boat. The supposition was that they were drowned at sea, if not, they must have landed on the Queensland coast.

To discover this man Durand was no easy matter; but, if successful, he might furnish me with the whereabouts of his whilom companion. I was dubious about the result of my search, for might I not be on the wrong track after all? Nevertheless I proceeded to Brisbane without delay, and in nearly all the chief newspapers in the Australian colonies caused to be inserted a brief paragraph to "Auguste Durand, late of Yengen," stating that his companion upon the voyage from the island to the mainland in 1876 wished particularly to meet him, as he had something important to communicate. This was the only means by which I could hope to find him, and congratulating myself upon having composed an artfully worded invitation, patiently awaited its result.

Several weeks passed without an answer, and I was vainly trying to devise some other method by which to reach the escaped convict, when one day I was informed by the hotel waiter that a gentleman desired to see me. I naturally concluded it was he, and expressed my willingness to receive him.

Judge my dismay however, when there was ushered in no less a person than my secretary!

"Well, old fellow," said he familiarly, offering his hand; "and why all this confounded mystery? I saw the advertisement in the *Argus*," he continued, "and, concluding something was up, left Melbourne at once. What is it?"

"The advertisement?" I gasped.

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"Yes. You want to see me."

"You are mistaken; I do not."

"But your advertisement was addressed to Auguste Durand, your humble servant, who shared your lot in that living tomb at Yengen, and who escaped with you!"

"What? Is this true?" I asked in astonishment. "Was I convicted for murder?"

"Of course you were, and I for forgery. But you seem to be as insane as when you left St. Kilda so suddenly six months ago. What's the matter with you?"

"Are you Auguste Durand?" I asked.

"That's my baptismal cognomen, though John Hallett suits me better just now."

"Then hear me," I exclaimed. "Perhaps I am not quite myself, but I have forgotten all. Tell me how we escaped, why I am rich, and you my servant."

He gazed at me incredulously for a moment, and after reiterating his opinion that I had taken leave of my senses, related the story of our escape.

Narrated briefly, it seemed we were pals in the same labour gang, and had plotted our escape for many months, until one day, finding a boat in which a keg of water and some biscuits had been conveniently placed, we took advantage of the opportunity. After drifting countless days upon the Coral Sea under a burning sun, we landed at last, more dead than alive, near Port Curtis. Overjoyed at our freedom, we at once commenced to seek a livelihood, and at Walloon turned miners. Fortune smiled upon me. I prospered, bought claims, and profited largely by speculation, though my companion, always unlucky, existed upon my charity. After seven years at the diggings, I married a wealthy woman, and removed to Melbourne.

"And what is my present position?" I asked, when he had concluded.

"You are the owner of two of the richest gold mines in Victoria; and I, always a Lazarus, am your confidential secretary. Most confidential," he added, smiling: "the master convicted of murder, and the servant of forgery."

By this narrative the blank in my life had been filled, and I became aware it was myself, the mysterious convict, I had been endeavouring to trace.

Was I a murderer? That I was innocent seemed clear, for it was only reasonable to suppose that after the collision my fellow travellers attempted to rob me, and that in protecting my charge I fired the fatal shot. Seeing I had killed the thief, and fearing the consequences I filled my pockets with the money and was decamping when arrested. Why I refused to give any account of myself at the trial did not seem so obvious; but after much deliberation I became convinced of the fact, by no means unknown in medical science, that in the collision, the terrible blow I had sustained upon the head caused me to lose all consciousness of the past.

From that moment I commenced an entirely fresh existence, remembering nothing of what had occurred before, and was therefore unable to tell even my name and nationality at the trial. The Foreign Office was either in ignorance of my position, or refrained from interfering from some unexplained cause; and thus for twenty-five years I had lived totally oblivious to the events anterior to the blow which so strangely affected my brain. On that memorable night in my own drawing-room, I must have struck my head against some hard substance—the corner of the mantelpiece probably—and this, as a counteraction, restored me to consciousness, though obliterating the remembrance of the intervening years.

On my return to St. Kilda, my wife welcomed me warmly; and, after I had explained the cause of my sudden absence and apparent insanity, she went to her room, returning with a sealed official envelope.

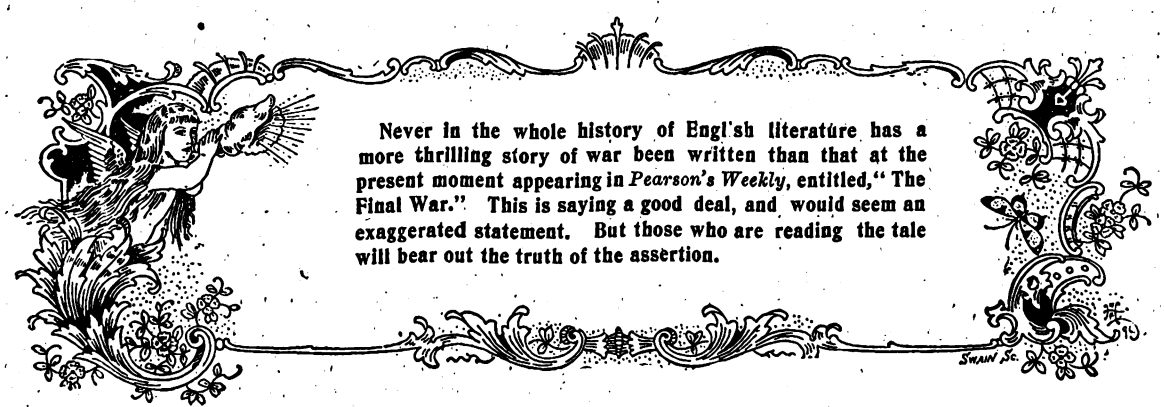
"This," she said, "you confided to my safe keeping after our marriage. It may be the lost dispatch."

It was. I grasped it eagerly, and read the superscription, then placed it on the fire and watched the flames consume it.

From that day I commenced life afresh, and can safely assert there is not a happier pair than Rose and I in all the colony.

Durand is no longer my secretary, but the keeper of a fashionable restaurant in Melbourne. I need scarcely add it was my money that purchased the business.

FRANCIS S. PALMER.



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THE SALVATION LASS

CAPTAIN GRACE threw open the window of her tiny room and looked out at the bright sunshine, the blue sky, the drifting, fleecy clouds.

"Glory to God," she murmured; "what a perfect day!"

Then she set the coffee on to boil, toasted some bits of bread, and boiled an egg. Before partaking of this simple breakfast, she bent her shapely brown head and whispered:

"Give me strength, Father, for to-day."

That was Captain Grace's daily morning prayer. Strength to sustain her through each day's work, to help her bear the taunting words, the insulting laughs, the profanity and vile language hurled at her on her rounds; strength to uphold her in her visits to the slums, and to push open the swinging doors of public houses and attack the devil in his very stronghold.

Captain Grace was a beauty, and that fact made her life all the harder. The face that looked out from under the ugly army bonnet was the face of an angel, with its ivory-like complexion, in which roses came and went; with its clear, resolute, turquoise eyes, its dimpled chin, straight little nose, and soft red lips.

The plain uniform of the Salvation Army, which renders a homely woman an absolute fright by its very severity, only emphasised the loveliness of the girl's face and figure. Too well did the young warrior know her charms. She heard them discussed by men at street corners, in tram cars, and in the public restaurants.

"What a bloomin' little daisy," said a rowdy.

"What a little darling," said a man about town.

Captain Grace often wished she were as ugly as Ensign Jerusha, who was pock-marked and squint-eyed, and thus escaped many of Satan's javelins. But a regular life, constant exercise and occupation, and high, pure thought, combined to produce a beauty which grew from day to day and from which the earthly elements were fast being eliminated.

The girl was gentle, refined, and intelligent. She had sacrificed many of the sweets and joys of life to lead this curious existence. She was very reticent about her past, lived only for her work, and to lay up treasure where moth and rust do not corrupt.

In the slums she was known, loved and blessed. Her small hands had pressed the aching head of the suffering, and scrubbed the floors of the slatternly. Her smiles and tears had mingled with those of the unfortunates of earth. Her cheering words, gracious deeds and prayers, were a sweet savour in the nostrils of the despairing.

And yet Captain Grace was a girl with a girl's love of pleasure, pretty things, ease, and comfort. She battled fiercely at times with these temptations—faint and weary with warfare, longing to yield, to leave the strife, to taste happiness and human joy. But her conscience ever sounded a trumpet call, and Captain Grace, obeying, sprang again to the conflict.

Just as she took down her dark blue bonnet from the wall there came a knock at the door. She opened it.

Miss Francesca Fadd stood there.

Miss Francesca Fadd was rich, pretty, kind-hearted, generous, and always had a nice hobby horse for herself to ride.

Just now her hobby horse was the Salvation Army.

She had attended the meetings, wept in her lace handkerchief, subscribed liberally, and confided to her dear friends that she felt herself chastened and comforted. She had hunted up the pretty captain, whose face had attracted her, and had made as great a pet of the girl as the young devotee would permit.

"Good-morning, dearest," said the caller.

"Good-morning, dear Francesca," replied the captain. "Come in."

Francesca seated herself and took a long survey of her friend.

The two girls formed a curious contrast. Miss Fadd was a study in brown velvet and sable. Big diamonds quivered in her pink ears, and a huge cluster of violets shook out their perfume from her breast. Her great brown eyes flashed questioningly on the other, who stood pale, serious, a trifle sad, but resolute.

"Have you decided, Grace?"

"Yes, Francesca."

"Well, you will come with me—give over this hard life, live with me, be my companion and sister? You know I am alone, rich, my own mistress. You shall have every luxury. We will travel."

Captain Grace lifted her little red roughened hand.

"No more, no more, I beg," she said quietly; "it cannot be."

Miss Francesca Fadd burst into tears.

She was honestly disappointed. She was fond of the girl. And she fancied the idea of playing Lady Bountiful.

Moreover, she liked to have her own way.

But Captain Grace would not surrender. She had marked out her path in life, and though it was rough and stony and might lead to a place of skulls, yet would she follow it.

An hour after this little scene Captain Grace reported for duty at headquarters. Her sweet face was like a ray of sunshine in the gloomy barracks.

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"Good-morning, Captain," said a black-eyed girl in a big gingham apron, grey shawl, and black hat—the regulation slum uniform.

"Good-morning, lieutenants," returning the salute; "do you feel like fighting to-day?"

"Yes, Captain," was the quick response. "I could down the devil and all his angels this morning."

"That's right," said Captain Grace cheerfully.

Lieutenant Sally was one of Captain Grace's *protégés*. She was a brand plucked from the burning. Captain Grace had rescued her from a life of frightful misery and sin, and Sally's devotion to her friend was unbounded.

The two received orders to sell the *War Cry* until two o'clock; after that they were to go about their regular slum duties. Up and down the streets, in and out of buildings, went the pair. They were repulsed and chaffed by turns. Doors were banged in their faces, and coarse jokes cracked at their expense.

But they did not appear to mind. They chatted animatedly, compared sales, encouraged each other; once Captain Grace helped a feeble tottering old woman across the street, under the very noses of the horses, and once Lieutenant Sally wiped the tears from a dirty little child's face and gave it a cake.

It was just as they were about to make their final call in a Chrystie Street public-house, that its doors were violently dashed open, and a dreadful old tramp, sodden, filthy, bedraggled, was kicked out on the pavement.

He was a pitiful sight. Shaking and trembling, he stood gazing vacantly about, then suddenly burst into tears.

Captain Grace hesitated one moment.

"Lieutenant," she said calmly, "I will meet you round at the Norfolk Street tenement as soon as possible. I have something to do here."

Lieutenant Sally saluted and departed. Then with a face pale as death, but inwardly glowing with a sublime passion, Captain Grace approached the poor old wayfarer standing there alone, and wiped the tears from his wrinkled cheeks with a trembling hand.

"Come, brother," she said gently; "come with me."

And holding him by his ragged sleeve, Captain Grace steered him along street after street, until she had landed him safely in one of the refuges established and maintained by the Army for such as he.

Then unwittingly she set her face towards her Golgotha.

It was nearly four o'clock when she entered the tenement. Up the black creaking stairs she picked her way to the fourth storey, pausing at a rickety door.

The room she entered was quite fresh and neat from its recent scrubbing. There was a pot of scraggly geranium in the window. A little boy of six was playing with some battered toys upon the floor. A pale face, white as the flabby pillow on which it lay, looked up with a wan smile as she entered.

"How are you to-day, my dear?" asked Captain Grace, as she bent over the sick woman. "Better? Ah! that's good. Has Lieutenant Sally been here?"

"Yes; she went downstairs about fifteen minutes since. See how nice she has made everything look."

"Yes, the Lieutenant is a hard worker," said Captain Grace, trying to mend a disjointed doll for the child, who exhibited his treasure with pride.

There were various other little services her quick eye noticed, and the time slipped away in their performance.

Suddenly there was a commotion. Sounds of hurrying feet and confused murmurs, deepening to a sullen swell of voices, were heard.

Across the threshold, in through the keyhole, in every cranny of the tumbledown door, something grey and ghastly came drifting and creeping in little wreaths and puffs.

And in an instant a terrible voice somewhere shrieked the awful word: "Fire!"

A terrible voice shrieked the awful word: "Fire!"

The engines came leaping like live things down the narrow street. There were frenzied shouts, cries, prayers, tumult, chaos.

Like flies, the wretched inhabitants of the wretched tenements clung to the walls, the windows, the narrow fire-escapes. There was the clatter of horses' hoofs, the bang of the ladders as the fireman flung them in place, and, above all, the heavy drone and hum of the ponderous engines.

"Take her first," said Captain Grace, indicating the sick woman, as a big brawny fireman, his eyes blazing with heroic excitement, plunged through the crashing window into the room. He gave the Salvation Army girl a look of sturdy admiration, and went down the ladder with the woman in his arms.

The child was clinging about Captain Grace's neck, his little face buried on her shoulder.

"Don't be frightened, darling," said the girl, patting him gently; "the good man will come back."

He came, stretching his arms out tenderly for the child.

"Keep a stiff upper lip," he shouted to her amid the smoke, the falling of timbers, the wavering of the floor under her feet.

It was just then that the billows of smoke rolled apart for a moment and the crowd saw the Salvation Army girl.

She was kneeling in prayer.

Through that maddened, cursing crowd, made up of roughs, loafers, and bruisers, ran a groan.

Men old in crime turned their hardened faces away the black smoke shut her again from sight.

Then came the last fearful crash, and Captain Grace—steadfast, brave, faithful unto death—was promoted.

ESTHER NOANES.

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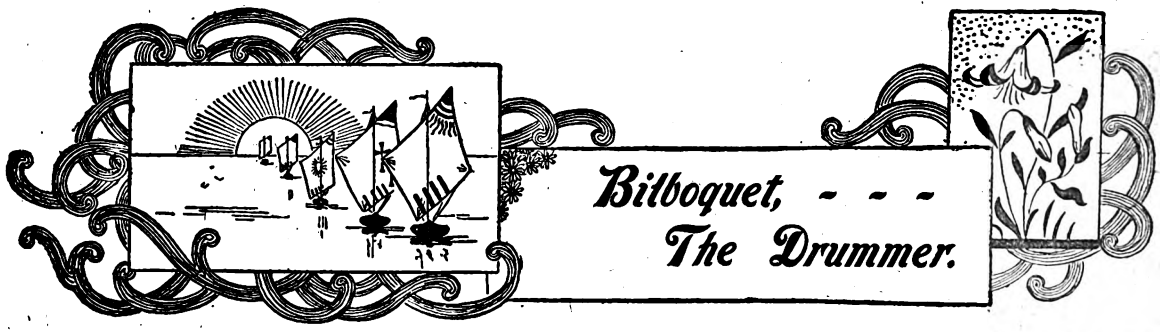

Bilboquet, - - - The Drummer.

In 1812, in the Ninth Regiment of the line, there was a drummer boy only thirteen years of age, a child of the troop, whose true name was Frolut, though the soldiers called him nothing but Bilboquet. Truly, with his tall thin body, surmounted by a big round head he certainly did resemble the object which had earned him the sobriquet.

One morning, the 12th of July, if I remember aright, the general in command received orders from the Emperor to take up his position on the other side of a narrow ravine, a dangerous place at the best of times, and now defended by a battery of six cannon commanding its approaches and our entire file of soldiers as well. To reach the place designated by the Emperor, it was necessary to take this battery on the banks of the Dwina, for the events that I am relating to you took place in the famous campaign against Russia.

All at once they see coming at full gallop an aide-de-camp of the general bearing the order for two companies of the sharpshooters to advance upon the battery. Three-fourths of them were bound to be killed, and the Voltigeurs, in spite of their intrepidity, point to the yawning cannon and grumble openly.

The captain had twice ordered the drum-major to call the tambours to the front to beat the charge, but he remained leaning upon his long staff, wagging his head, and little disposed to obey.

All this while Bilboquet was seated astraddle his drum, his eyes upon his chief, his lips whistling softly to himself an air of the fife, and his fingers tattooing the charge. As the command to forward comes again, and for the third time from the captain, he leaps to his feet, places his drum-sticks in position, passes under the nose of the drum-major, and with a scornful "Come on, old girl, come on!" pours out in a single phrase all the anger and insults that he has treasured in his heart.

The drum-major raises his cane, but it is too late, Bilboquet is at the head of the two companies, and beating the charge like a madman. The soldiers follow him and rush upon that terrible battery. The cannons roar, the Voltigeurs roll in the dust, many of them to rise on more; the smoke, blown by the wind, envelopes us like a cloud, the noise deafens us, but as it lifts a moment and floats away we can still see, upright before us, not twenty steps in advance, the dauntless figure of the little drummer beating the charge. We could even hear, feeble as it was, the sound of his instrument passionately bidding defiance to every Cossack in creation.

The Voltigeurs rush on, Bilboquet always ahead of them with his ceaseless rataplan. The battery roars again, a perfect storm of shot pouring upon the infuriated *débris* of our two beautiful companies—scarcely fifty men remain of the brave two hundred—and never had the drum-major sounded the charge as Bilboquet sounds it now—sternly, boldly, and, fired by the fever of vengeance, he plies his arms with the strength of twenty. When the smoke lifts anew the battery is taken.

In the meantime, Napoleon, mounted upon a knoll to the right, 10,000 soldiers of the Guard behind him, watches them as they execute his orders, and as the remnant of the Voltigeurs enters the battery, he signs to an aide-de-camp, who gallops away, to return almost immediately.

"How many?" the Emperor asks him, as he stops before him, "how many crosses will be needed to-morrow?"

"Forty," the officer replies, "forty—the rest are dead."

* * * * *

And the next day, as Napoleon had said, regiments were gathered together to see the distribution of the medals to the gallant handful who had executed so faithfully the Emperor's will. One by one the names of the survivors had been announced, and the cross of honour bestowed. The ceremony is ended, and all are about to retire, when suddenly there is a stir among the soldiers and a shrill voice sounds from the ranks:

"But me," it cries. "Me—you've given me nothing!" and General B——, who had charge of the distribution of the crosses, turns about to find planted before him our little friend Bilboquet, his cheeks as red as fire and his eyes full of tears.

"You!" cries the officer astounded; "you, my boy. Why, what do you want me to give you? What do you expect?"

"The cross like the others," Bilboquet promptly answered; "it was I who beat the charge on the battery—I was the first to enter!"

"And you thought we had forgotten you! But you are too young, my boy, to have the cross yet," said the general kindly, seeing that he was only a child; "we will give it to you when you've a beard on your chin like the others. Here's something to console you while waiting," and, dipping his hand into his pocket, he drew forth a twenty-franc piece and held it out to the little fellow.

Bilboquet looked at it, but without a thought of taking it, great tears rolling from his eyes and down his cheeks as, motionless as stone, he stood before the general. Even those who had teased him most, touched by his grief, were about to intercede for him. Bilboquet, however, did not give them time, and suddenly, as if seized with a new idea, reached out his hand, took the money from the general, and, without more ado, put it in his pocket, saying as he turned away:

"Thanks, my general; it will do another time."

* * * * *

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Not long after the taking of the battery of the Dwina, the French troops entered Smolensk victorious and jubilant, Bilboquet with them, of course, and greatly pleased at the sights about the city, which he had asked to be allowed to visit almost at the moment of arrival. Yet, after all, it seemed to be the faces of the people in which he took the greatest interest, considering and examining them after the fashion of an amateur choosing merchandise.

I must admit, however, that it was not the peasants he regarded thus, with their long and bushy beards; doubtless they were well enough, and bountifully supplied, but of such an ugly, unpleasant red that Bilboquet, after a moment's scrutiny, turned away his eyes and continued his way.

At last, wandering along in this fashion, our *petit tambour* came to the Jewish quarter, for the Jews of Smolensk, like the rest of the Jews of Poland and Russia, confine themselves to a certain quarter.

When Bilboquet entered it you can imagine his delight, for of all the beards in the world the Jews assuredly have the loveliest, long, silky, and black as ebony, and it was beards the little drummer-boy was hunting. Some half way up the street he found the shop he wanted, the master of it bearded like a Turk.

"Vot vill you haf, my leetle sir?" cried the merchant civilly, as he crossed the threshold, "vot can I gif you?"

"Your beard," replied Bilboquet, without stopping to parley.

"My beard!" repeated the Jew, astonished, "you are joking!"

"I am not," said Bilboquet again, placing his hand upon the pocket where his money rested; "but do not think I want to rob you; here's a napoleon—you can give me change," and he threw it upon the counter between them.

In vain did the merchant endeavour to make Bilboquet hear reason. He was as obstinate as a blind horse, and engaged in such a wrangle that before long he attracted the attention of some soldiers passing in the street, who stopped to learn the motive of the quarrel. The notion of the little drummer boy struck them as so particularly funny that they sided with him, and compelled the unfortunate proprietor to give up his beard, one of them, the braggart as well as the barber of the regiment, drawing a razor from his pocket and shearing him without mercy or lather.

Having horribly skinned the Jew, he gave the shearing to the delighted Bilboquet, who carried it at once to the tailor of the regiment, and had it sewn up to a piece of sheep-skin taken from a broken drum. All this was the talk of the regiment for several days, but as no one could get from him what he intended to do with it, it was forgotten in other things, for we were now on the march again.

With the history of this campaign my story has nothing to do. I need only remind you that from the time of our arrival at Moscow misfortunes began, the cold and devastation depriving us of all our resources. Everyone returned as best he could, and it was with difficulty that a few regiments could be kept together to represent the body of the army and obey the orders of the general. Bilboquet's was one of these, and he was of the rear guard that prevented the thousands of Cossacks who followed the army from massacreing the unfortunate and solitary soldiers.

One day they had just retreated across a little river, and to retard the pursuit of the enemy the general had ordered the destruction of the bridge over which they had passed, a fragile wooden one; but the barrels of gunpowder hastily placed produced but little effect, and though the arches were displaced and thrown into the water, the framework caught and remained resting upon a single beam, which so held it that the enemy on arrival could easily secure and reconstruct it.

The general, knowing that the safety of the entire army depended upon the destruction of this bridge, ordered back the sappers to cut the beam and tear away the clinging framework.

As they were ready to embark, however, the enemy arrived on the other bank of the river and began such a rain of bullets that it seemed impossible for any sapper to reach it alive. They were about to give up and to defend themselves as best they could, when all at once they saw a soldier leap from the ranks into the river, his axe upon his shoulder.

The plunge carried him out of sight, of course, but soon he reappeared, his long flowing beard and peculiar cap showing him to be a sapper—thus offering himself as a sacrifice for the safety of others. That the water around him boiled with the bullets of the enemy you can be sure, nevertheless, he continued to advance bravely, vigorously, and five minutes later was at work upon the beam, sheltered behind the broken framework. A dozen blows and it crashed into the river, and the sapper was on his way to the bank again.

But picture our amazement, as mad with joy, we rushed to the edge to greet him, to find that it was the little Bilboquet, with a black and glossy beard suspended from the end of his chin.

"What does this mean? What is this masquerade?" cried the voice of the general behind us; "is it you again, giddy-head?"

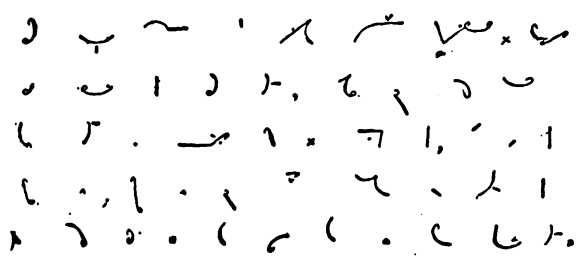
"Yes, my general, it is I, Bilboquet," answered the child; "you said you'd give me a cross when I'd a beard upon my chin. Here is a famous one, for I wasn't stingy, and spent the whole of the money you gave me for it!" and he drew himself up with an air of pride.

The general, thunderstruck at such bravery and shrewdness, held out his arms to Bilboquet as if he had been a man, and taking the cross from the lapel of his own coat, fastened it with his own hand in the buttonhole of his drummer's jacket.

It is upon the shoulders of the other *petits tambours*, you can rest assured, that the drum-major now establishes the time.

J. P.

Isn't This So?



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THE WYTHECOMBE MYSTERY.

BY JOHN K. LEYS, *author of "The Tenth of June," etc., etc.*

SUMMARY.

WHILE on a sketching tour in Wales, LAUNCELOT VERE gets into a dangerous position on the face of a precipice. His life is saved by WINIFRED DENVERS, to whom he becomes engaged. On the wedding morning LAUNCELOT disappears, and Miss UNWIN, the village schoolmistress, disappears at the same time. HAROLD KENYON, a friend of LAUNCELOT'S, leaves Wythecombe in search of his friend, and goes to London. He finds that the missing man has drawn £75 from his bank, and also discovers several sketches of Miss UNWIN in the artist's room. He interviews the guard of the train by which Miss UNWIN travelled to London, and finds that she was met by a man corresponding in description to VERE. On return to town he finds that Miss UNWIN has been murdered on Hampstead Heath. The trial reveals the fact that she and VERE were at one time very friendly, and that the revolver found by the deceased belongs to VERE.

KATHERINE DALE, a young lady with whom HAROLD KENYON is in love.

PAUL SHENSTONE, engaged to KATHERINE DALE.

REV. MARK DENVERS, Rector of Wythecombe, and WINIFRED'S father.

MR. BEAUMONT, a solicitor, and friendly with VERE.

MR. DAUNT, an old lawyer, and friendly with KENYON.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RIVALS.

PAUL SHENSTONE was one of those truly enviable persons who never allow their feelings to interfere with the carrying out of their resolutions. He had injured his cause with Kate by showing his jealousy of Harold Kenyon. That was clear enough. Therefore he at once resolved to make his peace with her; and he shrewdly suspected that he might possibly turn the blunder he had made to good account.

He called on Kate the very next morning, and with much apparent frankness apologised for what he called his abominable temper the night before.

Like all generous-minded people, Kate was averse to receive an apology, and inclined to believe, simply because it was offered, that she herself had been in some way to blame. She begged Paul to think no more of the matter, and began to think that she had judged him harshly the night before. And when he went on to say that she was, of course, a better judge than he could be as to what persons she should see, her heart fairly relented to him. She thought for the moment that he was more like what he used to be when they were first engaged, not the hard and cold being he had shown himself lately.

She smiled kindly on him; and after a little ordinary talk he rose to take his leave.

"Won't you stay to see mamma?" asked Kate; "she will be in in ten minutes."

"Not to-day, I think. But, Kate, before I go, would you mind telling me what day you would like fixed for the great event? We must settle it some time in advance, you know."

"You won't put me off again, Kate, will you?"

The smile died out of the poor girl's face; and the look which had become habitual to her during the last few weeks—the look of one who carries a bitter grief in silence, came back to her eyes.

"You said the first half of October, if you remember," added Paul.

"Did I?" she cried with a start. "That is very near now."

Shenstone could have stamped with impatience; but he held himself well in hand, and answered with a gentle, deprecatory smile:

"You won't put me off again, Kate, will you?"

"N—no. I don't mean that."

"Then let us say the twelfth, if that will suit you. I shall have time to give the necessary notices, and so on. May I fix it for the twelfth?"

Kate's reply was inaudible; but her lover took it for an assent. He thanked her, pressed her hand, and touched her cheek with his lips, knowing well enough that she would be better pleased with this perfunctory embrace than with a more fervent one. Then he left her at once, lest the tacit consent she had given should be recalled, and went along the Darnport road at a rapid pace. The road was empty, but for a farmer's man driving a cart of fodder. The man noticed and wondered at the gleam of triumph in Shenstone's eye, the suppressed smile of keen satisfaction that rested on his lips.

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But Kate?

She threw herself on the sofa, and buried her face in the cushions. No sound of weeping was heard in the room; her grief was too bitter for tears.

"Oh God!" she cried suddenly, lifting her pale face heavenward. "Can it be that on account of a foolish promise, Thou dost demand this sacrifice at my hands?"

There was no answer. The girl had no one to give her counsel. Her mother, who was kindness itself, would feel distressed if she told her her trouble, and would probably advise her to break off the match, as the easiest thing to do under the circumstances. Kate did not want to be told what would be the easiest and pleasantest thing to do. She wanted to do what was right, let the cost to her personal inclinations be what it might. And there was no one to tell her what the right course was. The Rector? She smiled at the idea of laying a point of conscience before Mr. Denvers, good man though he was. There was no one who could speak to her with that authority which alone can give a sense of security to a perplexed conscience.

So far as she could see, she was bound by her promise, unless her lover chose to release her; and as he steadily refused to do this, there was no help for her.

Meanwhile Paul had arrived at his destination.

Darnport was a small, old-fashioned seaport, which some years before had fallen into a state of stagnation, but now seemed to be in a fair way of recovery. The London and Devonshire Bank, of which Harold Kenyon was the local manager, fronted the market-place; and thither Shenstone directed his steps.

"Mr. Kenyon in?" he asked the cashier; and without waiting for an answer, he passed into the bank parlour.

"How d'ye do, Kenyon? I just looked in to see what my balance may be at present," he said.

Harold begged his visitor to sit down, touched a bell, and asked the clerk who answered it to bring him the required information.

"Almost run out, I see," said Shenstone carelessly, when the slip of paper was handed to him. "I may overdraw a little, I suppose?"

"Certainly, but we should want something in the nature of security, or——"

"Oh, I can't be plagued with all those forms. If you can't oblige me, I can easily get the money elsewhere."

"Or a guarantee signed by some one we know," continued Harold.

"You don't always insist on that, do you?" asked Paul sharply.

"Not in the case of old customers whose circumstances are well known to us; but you have not been long in this neighbourhood, so you can't expect to be indulged like an old inhabitant."

Kenyon spoke in a light, pleasant tone; but Shenstone did not seem mollified by his manner. He reddened angrily, as he replied:

"You have not been long in this neighbourhood yourself, if it comes to that, Mr. Kenyon."

"Perfectly true, Mr. Shenstone. And I assure you I meant nothing offensive by my remark. Only, you must see that a customer of forty or fifty years' standing may reasonably expect——"

"Oh, yes, I know!" cried Shenstone impatiently.

"Have you settled about the purchase of your house?" asked Harold.

"Eh? My house? Fir Croft? Yes. I am going to buy it. I want a trifle—two or three hundred would be enough—to make up the purchase-money."

"Then it can easily be arranged by depositing the deeds."

"And I want a little for my wedding tour. You may have heard that I am to be married on the twelfth of next month?"

"N—no. I had not heard. That is, I had not heard it was so near," stammered Kenyon, who had turned very pale.

The other looked at him curiously, and gave a little laugh as he returned: "Yes; I am to be turned off that day, it seems. Shall we see you at the ceremony?"

"I haven't been asked, so I don't suppose you will," said the young man shortly.

"Don't say that. *I* should be pleased to see you; and I'm sure I can speak for Miss Dale too. But about the money—I *may* want to overdraw, perhaps two hundred pounds. I suppose if I get any of my friends here to guarantee the amount—Croft, or Blenkinsop, or old Matthew Rogers—that will do, eh?"

"Any one of these names will be perfectly satisfactory," returned Kenyon.

"Very good. I'll go and look one of them up, and send you the guarantee by post. Good-day."

"Good-afternoon."

"Oh, by the way," said Shenstone, turning back when he had reached the door, and closing it behind him. "I suppose you have quite given up your idea of hunting up that fellow Vere?"

"Thou dost demand this sacrifice at my hands?"

Kenyon reddened angrily, and paused for a moment to control himself before he answered.

"Practically I have. I don't know where to look for him."

"But would it not be highly inconvenient for him if you *did* find him? You could not deliver him up to justice, at least it would be most painful, of course, to do that; and yet you could not wish to become an accessory to the murder by concealing him."

"I don't believe my friend did commit the murder!" cried Kenyon, striking the writing-table with his fist.

Shenstone stared at him for a few seconds without speaking.

Then he went up to Kenyon and held out his hand.

"Forgive me, Kenyon," he said. "I see I have wounded you; I assure you nothing was farther from my intention. It does you honour to cling to the belief in your friend's innocence. I wish I could do the same. I do, indeed."

Kenyon took the offered hand not very willingly.

"And all I ask is this," continued Shenstone, "if I can be of any service in discovering Vere's whereabouts, or in proving his innocence, will you let me know at once?"

"Thanks; I will," said Harold. "But I confess I have little hope of that. Sometimes I fear that the poor fellow has destroyed himself."

"That possibility has been in my mind for some time," said Paul gravely. "But should you hear any news of him

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you will let me know at once, and allow me to give you any help I can?"

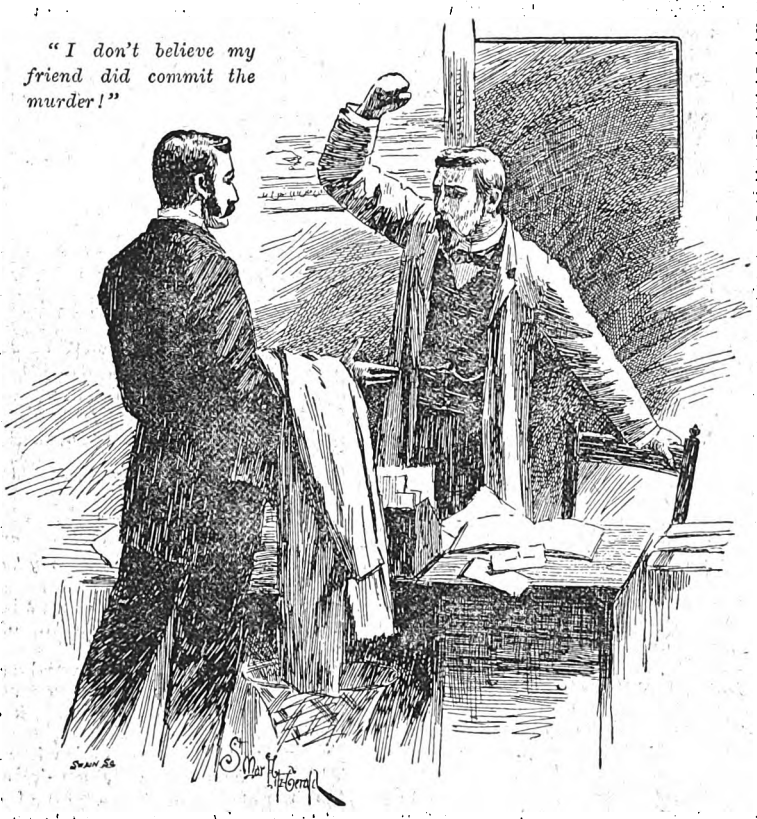
Kenyon promised that he would do so; and the two men parted.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FIRST AND LAST APPEAL.

IT was impossible for Kenyon to do any more work that day. One hateful thought was continually in his mind; despair was at his heart. Kate's wedding day! It was fixed at last. So many suns would rise, so many evenings close, and then Kate would be beyond his reach for ever.

Without his knowing it, those last interviews between her and himself had had the effect of inflaming his love for her. He could not reason down his passion now, as he had done a few weeks before. It cried aloud, and would not be silenced. The idea of Katherine Dale's passing into Paul Shenstone's keeping, to become his, in three short weeks was maddening to him. He wondered how he had been able to keep calm, and disregard Shenstone's tone of mockery, his triumphant smile.



"I don't believe my friend did commit the murder!"

He could not rest, could not stay indoors. Flinging on his hat, he told the cashier that he would not be back that afternoon, and hurried out into the street.

The sky was black, and some heavy drops were falling; but Harold cared nothing for the weather. He walked on, as fast as he could, towards Wythecombe. Perhaps, without intending it, he naturally turned in the direction in which *her* home lay.

Before he had cleared the town, the roll of thunder fell on his ears. But he scarcely noticed it. His only thought was to walk on, anywhere, faster and yet faster, vainly seeking relief from the torture that was gnawing at his heart.

Suddenly there came a blinding flash, which seemed to strike the earth at his very feet, and with it a crash as if all the artillery in the world had united in one terrific discharge. Instinctively Harold leaped backwards, hardly knowing whether he had been struck or not. Then a deluge of water came down, and he looked round for shelter.

The only house in sight was a ruined cottage that stood by the wayside a quarter of a mile further on; and he remembered that there was no other house nearer than Darnport. So he ran on to the cottage, and reached it just as another thunderclap pealed from the clouds.

The doors and windows were gone, but that mattered little. He sprang inside, and turned immediately to look back on the storm that was raging in the valley.

"Mr. Kenyon!"

The voice he knew so well thrilled through every nerve in his body. He startled violently, and threw a wild glance back into the desolate room, almost as if he expected to see the ghostly apparition of the woman he loved.

Katherine had just risen from a log, on which she had been seated; she stepped forward and held out her hand. Harold took it without speaking.

"I took shelter here a few minutes ago," said the girl in her clear musical tones. "Aren't we fortunate in finding a roof to cover us? Just see how it pours."

Harold continued to look at her, but made no reply.

"That was a grand roar, was it not? And it followed so close upon the flash. That shows that the discharge took place close by, doesn't it?"

She seemed unconscious that her companion was still steadily gazing at her, not rudely, but as if he had not yet recovered from his surprise at meeting her in that deserted cottage. At length his gaze wandered from her face to the scene without, while Kate continued to make commonplace remarks in a light and cheerful tone. Harold began to wonder whether he could have mistaken her sentiments altogether; it never occurred to him that she was talking merely to cover his confusion.

But a one-sided conversation cannot go on for ever.

Katherine paused, wondering at her companion's persistent silence.

The rolling of the thunder, and the noise of rushing water and boisterous wind filled the ear. Then she heard Harold's voice, so low and hoarse that it startled her.

"Miss Dale, I have heard that you are to be married on the twelfth of next month. May I ask you a question? Is it—is it true?"

"Yes, it is true."

Neither looked at the other while the question was put and answered.

"I am sorry to hear it."

Kate gave a slight start. Kenyon's voice was so hard and stern.

"Why?" She regretted the word the moment she uttered it. She ought to have said something very different.

"Why?" echoed Kenyon. "Because I believe it is not for your advantage or your happiness to marry Paul Shenstone. I distrust him. He has a cold, hard nature. He will not, he cannot, make you happy. Oh, Kate, if you value your life's happiness, if you want to escape perpetual misery, do not marry a man whom you do not love. Do take time to think——"

"Stop! Stop! Mr Kenyon. I cannot listen to you! What right have you to say such things to me?"

"What right? The right of one who sees a fellow creature

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"Mr. Kenyon!"

slipping over a precipice, to warn him of his danger, and if possible pull him back! I know what I have said is most unconventional, highly improper, and all the rest of it. But when I think of the misery of a loveless marriage, the wretched make-believe of affection, the agony of the ever-returning thought that it might all have been so easily avoided—the sense that there is no escape, none while life lasts——"

"Mr. Kenyon, I will not endure this. I cannot bear it. I will run out into the rain."

But the words had hardly left her lips before he stood in the doorway, making escape impossible.

"All I implore of you is to delay a little," he said, "before taking the irrevocable step. Six or twelve months would make it plain whether your heart was——"

"Mr. Kenyon, again I tell you you are taking a most unwarrantable liberty. You are insulting me grossly. You——"

"I? I insult you?"

"You are insulting me, though you may not intend it. I am not acting without thought or deliberation."

"Miss Dale, only say that you *love* this man, and I will go away and not say another word."

"Again, I say, Mr. Kenyon, you are taking a most unwarrantable liberty. Is it kind or manly of you to keep me imprisoned here and force this conversation upon me?"

"Think Kate——" For the second time he had called her Kate that day, though he had never done so before. Neither of them noticed it.

"Think, you can *never* break the chain. Think how heavy it may be. Why be in such haste to rivet it round you?"

"I have thought of it. I have thought of it all!" cried Kate, weakly abandoning her former line of defence. "God help me, I cannot do otherwise. I *must* keep my pledged word."

"Then a betrothal is in your opinion as binding as a marriage?"

"No. An engagement may be broken for many good reasons; but merely changing one's mind is not one of them."

"Why not?"

"Because that would reduce a promise to marry to a sham, a nothing. If there were no faithful and honourable people in the world, no promises would be worth anything at all."

"But your life's happiness?"

"Was happiness, founded on dishonour, ever worth having?" asked Kate; and a melancholy smile stole over her features as she spoke.

"But you will delay a little? You will consult your friends?"

"No," said Kate gently. "My mind is fixed."

"And you would make us both miserable for ever sooner than——"

Kate blushed scarlet. Harold saw his blunder; but it was too late. He felt that he had lost the day.

"Mr Kenyon," said the girl in an authoritative tone, "you must not say one other word to me on this subject. You have said too much already. Think! If you had become engaged to a girl, and if, within a few weeks of the day fixed for the marriage, another man, an acquaintance of your own, should endeavour to persuade your *fiancée* to break off the match—how would you regard such conduct?"

Harold was silent, his eyes fixed gloomily on the ground.

"Let us forget this conversation," said Kate yet more gently, "and try to bear our burdens patiently. And now—the rain is nearly over—good-bye."

He fell on his knees, and covered his face with his hands, while a big tearless sob shook his breast. When he stretched out his hands to touch her dress as she passed him, they met the empty air.

She had gone. He could not see the look—a look of tender pity, of love, and of deep sadness with which she had bade him farewell. Nor could he guess at the pain that gnawed at her heart. For she was to be sacrificed upon what she believed to be the altar of duty. She was to be the victim.

It is always so. Unless the woman is one of those

"Good-bye."

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rare beings, a heartless coquette, she is the one who suffers.

* * * * *

Kenyon rose from his knees and went slowly back to Darnport. But he did not think it possible for him to remain in the neighbourhood of Wythecombe. Change of some sort he felt that he must have. That evening he made all the necessary preparations; and next day found him in London.

CHAPTER XIV.

Only a Scrap of Paper.

Kenyon went to London without any fixed purpose or intention. He longed to escape from the familiar surroundings of home, where at every turn his wound was chafed by some association or remembrance. He hardly reflected that he was neglecting his duty. When the thought of business did recur to him, it only gave rise to some half formed intention of asking Mr. Bonnington to grant him leave of absence, or, if that was impossible, to accept his resignation.

Yet the time hung heavily on his hands. He would wander about the streets for what seemed a long, long time, and then would pull out his watch, to find that an hour had scarcely flown.

One day he happened to pass an old-fashioned tavern, called the "Cock Pheasant," which he had once been in the habit of frequenting; and, rather because it was past his usual dinner time than from any desire to eat, he went in and sat down.

The hour for luncheon was long past, but the dinner hour (according to London ideas) had not nearly arrived; so that the dining-room was all but empty.

Harold took up a newspaper to pass away the time while his meal was being prepared; but he noticed that one of the waiters, a tall, stout, sandy-haired man, was regarding him from a little distance with a certain amount of interest.

The steak and potatoes were produced in due time, and as the waiter placed them before the solitary guest he said with a smile:

"Beg pardon, sir, but we don't see you as much as we used to do, do we, sir?"

It was pleasant to Harold in his lonely state to find that he was remembered by somebody, even if it were only a waiter; and he, too, smiled as he answered:

"I used to come here pretty often, I think."

"Yes, sir. With a gentl'man as is a hartist."

Harold looked up with a start, and he vividly remembered the days when he and Vere used to come to that very room and order their meal together. It seemed a long time ago.

"I live in the country now, a long way off," he remarked.

Harold got through his dinner, and called for his bill.

"That gentleman, sir, that used to dine here with you so frequent——" said the waiter as he pocketed the money.

"Yes; what about him?" asked Harold sharply. He expected to hear something that he would rather have remained ignorant of.

"He was dining here last week."

"Indeed? What day was it?"

"What day would it be? Tuesday, I should say. Yes, sir, it was Tuesday. But I was going to ask if you could give me the gentleman's address."

"What do you want that for?" cried Harold in surprise.

"It was this way, sir. The gentleman left his overcoat, seeing as he and his friend went away rather hurried, and I thought if I had his address I would take it round to him, as he might have forgot what he had done with it."

"Very true," answered Harold. "If you give me the coat I will leave it at the gentleman's rooms myself."

The waiter pocketed the five shillings Kenyon gave him, and in a few seconds returned with the coat.

The sight of it gave Harold a strange thrill. It reminded him so vividly of the man who had worn it.

Suddenly an idea occurred to him.

"You spoke of the gentleman who owns this coat coming here with a friend," he said. "Was his companion a lady?"

"I'll take my solemn affidavy."

"A lady? No, sir. Certingly not. He was a gentleman, young, and rather stout."

"On Tuesday evening?" asked Harold incredulously.

"On Tuesday evening last, sir. I'll take my solemn affidavy. I remember the day because I went to a meeting in the Agricultural Hall that same evening."

"Odd, surely," thought Harold, "for a man who has eloped with a young woman to come here and dine with a friend of his own sex on the very evening of the elopement!"

"This gentleman you speak of, who was with my friend," said Harold slowly, "I should like very much to know who he could have been."

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"He's not one of our regular customers," answered the waiter; "I don't rec'lect that I ever seen him 'ere before."

"Short, you said he was, and stout?"

"Exactly, sir."

"Had he a short, thick moustache of light-coloured hair, and small brown eyes?"

"I think he had, sir," said the waiter in a hesitating way. "I should say that was the gen'lman's description; but I would rather see him fust."

"Do you think you would know him again if you saw him?"

"I'm certain I would, sir—certain of it."

This was an important point; for the man whom Kenyon had tried to describe was Arthur Beaumont, the young lawyer who had told Kenyon that Vere had not kept his appointment with him on that Tuesday evening.

But Kenyon thought it better to say no more just then. He was anxious that the waiter should not learn Vere's name, and thus discover that his friend, the owner of the overcoat, and the man who, by the verdict of the Coroner's jury, stood charged with the murder of Jane Unwin, were one and the same man. And he was not sure that he would take any more steps to penetrate the mystery. For aught he knew, Vere's one chance of safety might lie in concealment.

If at any future time he wished to ascertain whether Beaumont had lied to him when he denied that he had seen Vere on that Tuesday evening, he might devise some way of bringing him and the waiter together. He therefore asked the waiter his name, and having ascertained that it was Forbes, he assured him again that he would carry the overcoat to the house of the gentleman it belonged to, and went away.

Carrying the overcoat over his arm, Kenyon resumed his solitary ramble. He went down to the Embankment, crossed Waterloo Bridge, and walked on, vaguely wondering where he should get to if he kept on in that direction for five or six miles. Then he retraced his steps, re-crossed the bridge, and turned towards the Abbey. From Westminster he went to Hyde Park, and so to Kensington, still without the ghost of an object, still utterly careless where he went or what became of him.

At length he felt tired, and accordingly he turned and made for his hotel.

When he reached it the head-porter came forward to relieve him of the overcoat which still hung over his arm. He had forgotten that he was carrying it about with him; and it was too late to take it to Vere's rooms that night. So he told the servant that he would take it to his bedroom, and carried it upstairs.

As he hung the coat up behind the door, it occurred to Kenyon that if he searched the pockets of it he might find some letter, or bill, or other document, which might afford a clue to Vere's intentions on the night of his disappearance, and might lead to his being found. A few days before Harold would have had the pockets turned inside out in five seconds; but now he hesitated, asking himself what possible good it would do to lay bare Vere's secrets, since he had abandoned the search for him.

After a time, however, curiosity prevailed over indifference. Harold approached the coat, and plunged his hand into one of the outside pockets. His fingers touched a bit of flimsy paper. He drew it out—a telegram. Doubtless the telegram which Martin, the railway guard, had told him Jane Unwin had dispatched from Exeter, the telegram bidding the infatuated man meet her at Paddington, on that fatal Tuesday evening.

Half mechanically his eyes ran along the pencilled lines.

His hands shook.

But when he reached the last word, he gave a hoarse shout, his eyes stared at the paper as if they were spell-bound; and his hands shook, so that the paper crackled.

This is what he read—

Must come up to London to-day. Am now en route. *Meet me Paddington six-thirty.*—Winifred.

(To be continued.)

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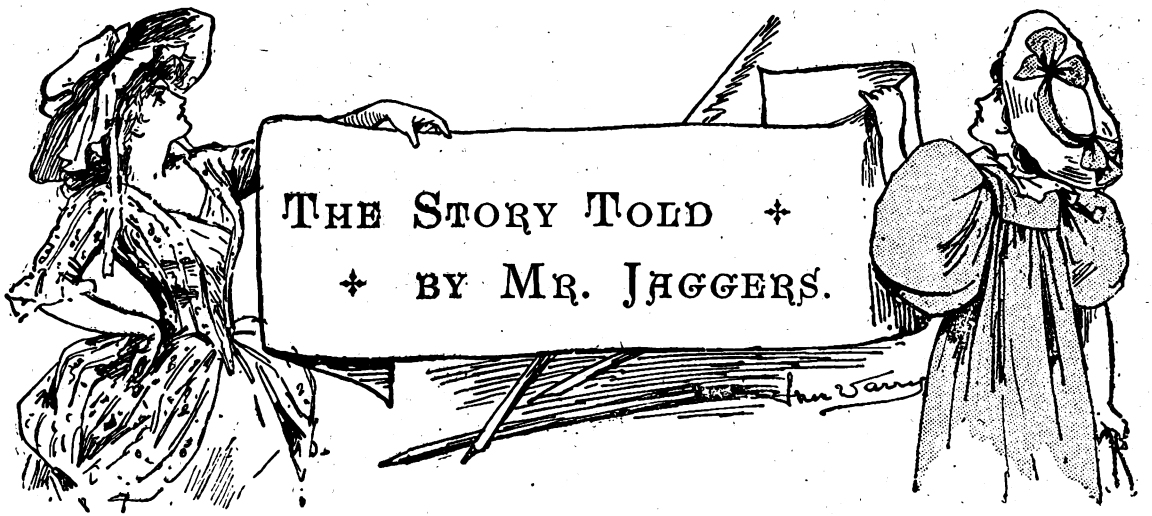

Yes, my name's Jaggers—Signor Jager, the play-bills have it; and I'm the man that did it. And if you are particular about wanting to know the long and short of it, I'm hardened enough not to mind telling you, though I've never told the story straight out before, and, it is likely, never shall again.

"Terrible fatality!" the papers called it, and "shocking accident!" and all that. And so it was; and it was something more to me. A man does not find his life any lighter to bear when he has a stain of blood on his hands, and it's the blood, too, of the woman he——

But never mind that—that's over, like the rest of it.

She came to us in the early spring, nearly two years ago. I remember the time of the year well enough, and the night, too—a delicious, sweet-smelling, soft-blowing sort of a night, after a pretty heavy shower.

We had just come from a little town about twelve miles behind, and were going to give our first entertainment in the new place the next day. We had the tents ready, and the company had scattered themselves, as they always did when they had the time for a bit of a lark, for they were most of them young people, and given to that sort of thing. Fact is, I was the oldest performer among them, and I may as well own up that I wasn't a favourite, having the character of being a close, surly, sharp-tongued fellow, who didn't care to be sociable. And I dare say it was all true enough, it's a way of mine to like to be left alone, and people generally find it out.

So I was left alone that night, and was standing at the door of the big tent, looking up at the sky, and working out some notions of my own about the stars, when Leroy—that's the owner, you know—came up behind me, and touched me on the shoulder.

"Come in here, Jaggers," he says.

I turned half round, and saw he was smiling, as if something queer had happened.

"What's up?" I asked.

"Come into the back and see," said he. "I've got as fanciful a little fish there as ever you saw, and I want your opinion on her."

"Her?" said I.

"Yes," he answered. "A girl, as I'm a sinner!"

I did not care about girls, and I did not care about going, but I went, because it was easier to go than to refuse.

There was a kind of room at the back, curtained off from the rest of the tent. It was the owner's room—in fact, where all the business was done, and it was there Leroy led me.

"Come in," he said, lifting the curtain, "and prepare yourself for a sensation."

Now, I'm not a nervous fellow, or a susceptible one, and I was even cooler than usual that night, as I passed under the curtain; but I'll confess that when it fell behind me, and I saw her standing in the dim light, I gave a bit of a start.

She was not more than sixteen or seventeen, and she was dressed like any other little country lass just out of the hayfield or a dairy—short, coarse, blue petticoat, and print jacket, clumsy little shoes, and red handkerchief tied under her chin and over her curly hair—and yet I swear she was enough to make any man start at first sight of her.

If it was to come to comparing, I don't know anything I could compare her to but a rosebud, or perhaps a red-tipped daisy, just opened fresh to the morning sun and dew; she was so rosy, and dimpled, and pretty, and childish. That was it, you see; she was more a child than a woman, a lovely, pouting child, half frightened and half daring, and trying to look defiant from under her long, dark eyelashes, even while the hand holding her little bundle was trembling, as I saw.

"This is my friend, the illustrious Signor Jager, my dear," said Leroy in his joking way. "The gentleman you saw at Rossthorne, the only performer of the famous knife-trick in the world. Will you tell him why you came here?"

She gave me a shy little wilful look, and blushed and pouted more than ever, dropping her eyes the next minute, and working the toe of her stout little shoe into the sawdust.

"I ran away," she said at last.

"What for?" I asked, roughly enough. I had seen runaways before, and I knew faces like hers were better at home.

"I seen the show at Rossthorne," she answered, "and I want to be a lady, like them as acts, and rides the horses. I'm tired of farm work, and I won't stay at home no longer, and my aunt Jane needn't think I will. So I run away and came here, to see if I couldn't learn to be a actor."

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I turned, and I looked at Leroy, and he looked at me, hiding his laugh as well as he could.

"Well?" says he.

"It isn't well," I says. "She had better take her bundle and go back."

She heard me, and turned on me all in a pet, her soft, round, baby face reddening and quivering, big angry tears springing to her eyes.

"I won't go back!" she cried. "I won't go back—never—to be laughed at, and made game of. I'm going to be a lady. If you won't take me, someone else will. They've said many a time that—that my face was my fortune."

There was a childish triumph and certainty, even in the hesitant drop of her voice. Any simpleton could have seen that, little fool as she was, she knew her power as well as many a wiser and worldlier woman.

Leroy shrugged his shoulders, and spoke to me in an undertone.

"Shall I take her or not?" he asked.

"I won't have anything to do with it," I said.

"It is just such a face as we want," said he. "Her clodhopper friends were not far wrong in saying it was her fortune. People will come just to have a glimpse at her."

Then he spoke to her.

"What is your name?"

"Susy," she answered. "I won't tell the other one. You can call me anything you like. I don't want my real name on the bills if I stay; and it isn't a pretty one either."

"Susy?" said Leroy. "Well, Susy is a nice little name enough; but it won't do for a play-bill. Suppose we call you Mademoiselle Suzette."

Her eyes sparkled, and she laughed, like a child pleased with a new toy.

"Then you will take me?" she cried eagerly.

"Yes," said he. "I'll take you, and we will see if we can't do something grand for you, though you have to learn a good many things first. I'll take you, Mademoiselle Suzette, because your friends were in the right."

So it was agreed that she should stay. And, when he was at leisure, Leroy took her to the women's lodgings, and handed her over to the oldest of them, a good-natured creature, who had charge of the wardrobe, and sometimes took parts that did not need good looks.

Julia Mouncey her name was, and a nice laugh Julia Mouncey had the next day, when she told us how Mademoiselle Suzette had conducted herself in her new *rôle*. We were not a grand company, and if there were any jokes, they were sure to be passed from one to the other freely enough.

"Bless you!" said the jolly soul, "it was as good as a comedy to hear her talk, and see her stand there with her eyes shining like a six-year-old's, just going with wild joy over the old things I showed her—tinselly rags, that wouldn't knock down for sixpence at auction. But I think the girls rather upset her when they came in, all in their common clothes. She thought they wore gauze and tights from morning till night, and she asked me afterwards how it was that they didn't look red and white, and handsome, as they did when they were acting."

If they had not been a good-natured lot altogether, there would have been envy among them; but, as it was, they took to the girl as a good joke, and even made a sort of pet of her. She was not quick at learning things, and gave plenty of trouble. But first one would give her a lesson, and then another, until she knew enough to go on and be looked at, if nothing else.

She was almost crazy with excitement the first night this happened, and the mixture of fright and ecstasy made her so pretty, that she was a sight to see!

Leroy had built so much on her beauty, that he even commissioned Julia Mouncey to buy a couple of new costumes for her; and when she went in the first—a page's dress, that she had to dance a simple little dance in—you may believe it or not, but the whole house burst out into a roar of applause at the sight of her, even before she could make her bow and begin.

It was her childish look that did it, as well as her loveliness. She had no stage air and grace, and could only stand behind the footlights, trembling with joy and fear; her immense liquid eyes dilated, and her cheeks, blooming with colour, not knowing whether to run away, or stay where she was.

Leroy stood at the side, in quite a fever of delight.

"Let her keep that baby look," he said, "and her fortune's made. How the public like a pretty little fool!"

The audience called her back again and again, but Leroy knew better than to let her go more than twice, though she was eager enough, and would have gone half-a-dozen times after the first, if she had been allowed.

When I came up, to be ready for my turn, she was standing at the left wing, panting like a bird in her triumph.

She had pulled off her little purple velvet, pearl-banded cap, and held it into her hand, and her hair lay in soft, moist, golden rings on her forehead. She looked as fresh as a baby just out of the cradle, and she gave me one of her shy looks, from under her eyelashes, and laughed and pouted.

"They liked me, you see," she said, "though you did say I'd better go back with my bundle."

"I didn't say they wouldn't like you," I answered.

She tossed her little head, and looked down at her cap.

"Then why did you say I had better go home?"

"Because I meant it," I said, and pushed by her without further parley.

I was a born fool. I knew it then, and I knew it all along, from first to last. There was not one thing about her that ought to have held a man's fancy for a minute. She was a vain, empty-headed little animal, and nothing more. She was ignorant for lack of opportunity; she was selfish, and had no more heart than a kitten. She cared for no human being but herself, and asked for nothing better than plenty of food, and idleness and fine clothes, and admiration; and yet I fell into her net in spite of every better feeling that held me back.

If I had not given way myself, and, standing coolly aloof, had seen another man drift into such a mad fancy, how I should have jeered at him. And for that matter I jeered at myself, and struggled hard enough; but it was no use.

Perhaps, however, I was a bit wrong in saying she had no other attraction than her baby bloom, and her big, dark eyes. There was something else about her, though it would be hard to describe what it was. It was a way she had, which took with women as well as with men, and made them wait on her, and treat her like a child; a sort of simple, helpless, careless fashion of seeming to expect petting and sacrifice from everybody.

She never did anything for herself, or gave thought

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for the future. So long as to-day brought comfort and sunshine, she never troubled herself about to-morrow. She would curl up in a warm corner, and watch Julia Mouncey sew for her until midnight, and then would turn in and fall asleep with a smile on her lips, never seeming to have a doubt that her costumes would be ready for her, though her own little bungling fingers had not been trusted with the work for a minute.

"I'm glad I ran away," she would say. "I wish I'd done it sooner. I'm happy here. But I hate my Aunt Jane!"

"Though her Aunt Jane," said Julia Mouncey, afterwards, a trifle out of patience, "has been a mother to her, as I have found out from what her own lips have told me."

And yet it was this very pretty, selfish helplessness that fascinated us. A different face would have made it a different thing, but that face of hers made fools of one and all. Her very vanity helped her, too, since it caused her to be eager for admiration, and anxious to please people where it might be done without self-sacrifice. What was it but vanity that made her make advances in her pouting, whimsical way, even to me? Being the madman I was, how could I help watching her in secret at all times, and, standing at the wings when she went on to sing her little idle songs, and dance her simple dances, which were mere nothings, and yet always brought down the house, as if they had been something wonderful?

I had been watching her so one night, when the public were more than usually wild over her, and, as she came running off, she saw me, and stopped suddenly, hanging her curly head, and pouting out her red lips petulantly.

"What do you look at me for?" she demanded. "You don't like me. Why should you stand there always—when you hate me so?"

I set my back against the wings, and folded my arms grimly.

"Do I hate you?" I answered.

"Yes, you do," she said.

"Then all the better for me," said I.

Most girls would have been rebuffed, but it was not her way to feel things deeply. She opened her eyes full upon me in an innocent, surprised fashion, but without a hint of real anger in her expression.

"I haven't ever done nothing to vex you," she said.

"No," answered I.

"Other people like me," with a fresh pout.

"I dare say," said I.

It was only her vanity that was stung, but, as I have said, her vanity was all that ever was touched by anything. To see even an ugly fellow like me, cold and unresponsive, was enough to upset her a bit. The dimples about her mouth began to work, and her eyes grew big and moist all at once. She dropped her little cap, and stopped to pick it up, and when she raised her head there were pettish tears on her lashes.

"I don't care," she said. "Everyone else——" And there she broke off, and tried to run past me.

It sounds like a poor business enough when it is told; but I swear to you, I lost all power over myself. Before I knew what I was doing I had caught her by the arm, and was holding her fast.

"Let me go!" she cried. "I—I hate you!"

"It was me that hated you a minute ago," I said, almost savagely. "Look at me, and see if I hate you."

I made her turn round in spite of her efforts, and I think my look frightened her, for the next instant she hid her face in her little hands.

"Do I hate you?" said I.

"I—don't know," she panted. "No—no—you don't. I want to go. They are calling me."

"May I stand here and watch you every night?" I asked, and yet not gently, either. I was wild with myself, even while I said the words.

Then she drew her hands away, and gave me a look—half triumph, half terror.

"Yes," she whispered, "if you like."

"I do like," I said, "or I shouldn't do it." And then I let her go.

Only the next morning Leroy came to me with a piece of news.

"The Wallers are going to-morrow," he said. "And we shall be in a nice fix if we can't get someone to take Lotta's place. We can do without the other one well enough, but it is very awkward to lose Lotta."

He was right there. The public liked the knife-trick principally, I used to think, because it was such a dangerous bit of business, and made them hold their breath until it was over, and I made my bow to them. And it was a dangerous business, too; as dangerous as it looked, which is saying a good deal.

This was how it was done, though I dare say you have heard of it, if you haven't seen it.

The girl Lotta, dressed in a boy's fancy costume, stood against a kind of screen, at which I threw a number of large, sharp knives, all escaping her by a hair's-breadth, until she was literally pinned, or penned in with them. They pierced the screen above her outstretched arms, and under them, down her sides, and round her hands; and often as I had practised, and old as the trick was to me, I can tell you I never did it without an uncomfortable feeling, and a wish that it was over.

But, as I have said, the public liked it, and it was so rare, that we could not dispense with it, and it was true enough that we should be in a tight place if we could not find someone willing to run the risk, and cool enough to do it safely.

"There's no one who can do it," I said.

Leroy laughed a dubious, uncomfortable sort of laugh.

"Well," said he. "It seems not; but I have an idea, if we can manage her—and there's nothing more sure than that—she would take wonderfully."

"Who?" I asked sharply.

He laughed again and twisted his moustache.

"Mademoiselle Suzette," he answered. "You know what a sensation she always makes; and she isn't nervous. She's a cold-blooded little animal, though one would scarcely fancy so to look at her. And she would do anything for a new costume, and I've promised her the prettiest dress she likes to choose for herself."

"What?" cried I. "Have you spoken to her about it?"

"Yes," said he, shrugging his shoulders, "and though she was more than half-frightened at first, I am not sure but the idea of a new triumph pleased her. The costume was the bait, however. She would sell her soul for a spangled petticoat, and would scarcely lose by the bargain."

"Leave her alone," I said. "Her soul is none of our business."

There was a moment's pause, in which he looked at me as if he was waiting to hear what else I was going to say. Men understand each other well enough as a rule, and he understood me.

"I won't do it," I said at last.

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"You won't?"

"No," said I.

"Very well," said he, and walked away whistling.

He was sharp enough to know better than lose his temper, and argue the point. If he had done that, the end would only have been a row, and defeat for him; and, as I say, he knew better than to run any risk.

He managed the matter another way. He went and talked to Susy, and the consequence was that when next I saw her she was in a pet, and would scarcely look at me.

"What's the matter?" said I.

"Nothing," she answered, and looked crosser than ever.

In a minute, however, she took a new turn, as I knew she would.

"No one ever said they wouldn't act with me before," she broke out, tossing her head. "There's plenty as likes me well enough to wish they could."

"Who told you I wouldn't act with you?"

"Mr. Leroy." And then all at once she raised her eyes to mine.

"Why wouldn't you?" she asked.

"Because," said I, faltering like a fool, "because I wouldn't trust myself."

"I'd trust you," she said. "I'll trust myself with you—with you."

She had no more sentiment about the matter than Mouncey herself, but she blushed, a sudden lovely blush, and then tried to laugh it off in her foolish, pretty fashion.

"I wouldn't trust everybody," she added; "but I know you wouldn't trust me."

I had never known just how weak I was until then, when I found myself giving way to her, knowing it was madness.

"Do you want to take the place?" I asked her.

We were standing at the door of the tent, and she looked out at the blue sky far away, as if she saw Heaven, and nothing nearer.

"Leroy says I shall wear pink satin and black velvet and gold," she said. "And I do so like pink satin, when it's shaded with black velvet."

She made me feel rough and half-savage.

"Do you like it well enough to risk your life for it?" I said.

She gave me the usual pout, and a laugh like a bird's trill.

"You wouldn't hurt me," she answered. "Nobody would; but you less than anybody."

And that bit of daring, triumphant folly was harder on me than all the rest.

So, to make the story short, Leroy got his way, and I practised in secret for hours. I did not want everyone to know what an idiot I was, so I kept quiet, only telling Leroy that I would not try the trick in public until I had got used to the idea of doing it with a strange face before me.

It was even harder than I thought when it came to the point, and I had to practise with the child herself, shuddering at first at the whiz of the knives, and yet trying to laugh.

"Shut your eyes," I used to order her; "and keep them shut. I don't want to see them."

But, of course, we both got pretty well used to it in time. One thing is certain, she was the bolder of the two always, and at last could laugh and look her loveliest, from beginning to end of the business, and did not seem to care how long it lasted, if people only applauded; and many a little tiff we had, because I was so determined never to let any amount of clapping and calling make me go through it twice in a night.

I suppose I ought to know what I looked forward to in those days, but I must say I don't; I was oftener miserable than not, and always restless and ill at ease. She did not care for me, I know, nor for anybody else but herself for the matter of that, though she had more admirers than she could have counted on her fingers in half a day.

"I don't want to be married," she used to say to Mouncey. "I wouldn't be married," with a little shudder, "for anything in the world. I want to live this way always. Jennie Wyce, in Rossthorne, got married, and she used to have to nurse horrid little babies, and sew, and work. And she was pretty, too, once. I would rather die than live as she did. No one cared for her."

"Pooh!" said Mouncey, who was fond of joking her. "You must marry a lord."

"A lord!" she said eagerly, opening her eyes to their widest, as Mouncey told me afterwards. "Do lords ever marry girls like me?"

"I should think so," said Mouncey. "Read the penny novelettes, and see if they don't. They never marry anyone else. They like actresses the best, and flower-girls and milliners. I have read of one who took a little crossing-sweeper, broom and all, in preference to a beautiful young duchess with golden hair and a haughty way and a million a year, not to speak of the family diamonds."

"And," says the woman to me, when she told the joke, "she believed it, and coloured up her loveliest, and lay on the sofa thinking about it, with her eyes all in a shine. You mark my words, the innocent little fool will be on the look-out for a lord from this day forward."

There might have been a fate in it. It was not three days before Leroy came to me laughing.

"We are going up in the world, by Jove!" he said. "Ford tells me we had a live marquis among the audience last night, and he came to see Mademoiselle Suzette. Did you see that pale, handsome, long-legged fellow in the front row? That was he."

"He had better have stayed at home," I said savagely.

"I dare say," said Leroy, "for his own sake, as well as for Mademoiselle Suzette's. For my part, I should not care to be troubled with her, charming as she is."

That night, when I went to look at the audience, I found Mademoiselle Suzette peeping through a hole in the curtain, and when she heard me, she turned round, blushing like a frightened child.

"I was looking for the lord," she stammered. "I never saw a lord, and they say there is one in the audience. Do you know which one he is?"

"He's in the second row to-night," I answered, half sneering. "The third man—a swell, with lilies of the valley in his buttonhole. How do you like his looks? Different from the rest of us, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes!" she burst out, at her first glimpse of him. "He's handsome, and nice, and his clothes are so beautiful!"

"I wonder if he will like my singing," she said tremulously to me as she passed me. "I'm frightened." It was not her singing he had come to hear.

His cool, indifferent face brightened as soon as he caught sight of her, and he leant forward, not missing a gesture or expression, as she did her part. Sometimes he smiled a little, but oftener he simply watched her, as he might

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have watched a beautiful bird, and at the end of her song he detached the lilies of the valley from his coat and threw them lightly and deftly towards her, so that they fell at her feet.

She had never received such a tribute before. Ours were not swell performances, and the people who usually attended them thought more of getting their money's-worth than of paying compliments to actors. She came off with the flowers fastened in her bodice, and she was in a state of such ecstatic excitement that she ran by me without seeing me at all.

Well, the next night he was there again, and the next, and the next, and always, after the first time, he brought a bouquet with him, and threw it to her, and so it went on for a week. At the end of that time Mouncey came to me in a fret:

"It's time for you or Leroy to do something," she said.

"There's nothing to be done," I answered.

I hadn't been looking on without seeing things, but what right had I to interfere; I was wretched enough to be more than half mad.

"There was a ring in her bouquet last night," she went on, "and this morning she went out to meet him. Bessie Jones has written three notes for her already. I have found that out."

"Well," said I savagely, "stop it if you can."

"Don't be a fool," she replied. "It's not women who can stop women—women like her, at least. If Leroy can threaten her enough to frighten her, or if you give her a lecture—she is half afraid of you—she may be held in check until we go away from here; and then, if he does not follow her, she is safe enough. She would forget the Angel Gabriel a week after she lost sight of him."

"Leave her alone," I broke out. "You women have a spite against each other." But I knew I was giving way to wild folly, even as I spoke.

She only laughed, in a comfortable scorn of the implied accusation.

"What?" said she. "Am I young enough to be jealous? A woman whose pink and white days are as far behind as mine are, ought to have got over envy. Bless you, man, I'm nigh on to fifty, and as tough as you. Keep your temper, and don't be simple."

That night, after the great knife-trick, when the bouquet flew towards mademoiselle, a note fell out of it, and I picked it up and put it in my pocket. She coloured up furiously, but dared not speak until we left the stage, and then she turned on me, ruffled like an angry bird.

"Give me my letter!" she demanded.

I took it from my pocket, but held it fast.

"A nice fellow—my lord!" I said, trying to speak without raging. "A charming fellow!"

She stamped her little pink foot on the boards.

"Give me my letter!" she cried. "Quick, quick!"

"Why quick?" said I. "Is he waiting to know if you will come?"

She reddened to the very roots of her curly hair, in her pretty fury of impatience, and she struck her hands together.

"Give it me!" she said. "I will tell him. It is no business of yours. I hate you!"

And that was the truth, too. She would have hated the best friend she had if they had crossed her in the merest trifle of a whim. That was her way. And yet, while I knew this, I could not help feeling a horrible pang when she spoke the words. They seemed to drive me wild, after a manner.

"Do you know where you are going to?" I asked her.

"Do you think I shall tell you?" she answered.

"I don't mean that," I returned. "I mean, do you know that you are going to utter destruction—to wretchedness and despair?"

I might as well have talked to the wind. There was not a warning on earth that could have touched her ever so slightly. She broke into a shower of tears, but it was only because she was afraid of being kept from her lover, and because my interference irritated her.

"I want my letter!" she sobbed pettishly. "He—he will be gone!"

What seized hold of me I cannot tell. I seemed to burst into a rage of feeling, notwithstanding my better sense. I flung the note upon the floor, and staggered back against the rough wall, hiding my face in my hands. I must have been holding on to some hope before, without knowing it.

"Oh, Heaven!" I cried. "Why is it that you are not a good woman?"

I had not been in the habit of thinking about women, but just at that moment I seemed to be knocked down, all at once, with a sense of what my gloomy life might have been made, if she had had a pure, loving heart, and I might have won it. But she answered me like a spoiled child.

"I don't want to be what you call a good woman. I hate good women!" and stooping down she picked up her note, and was off like a flash.

Leroy was wiser than I was, however. We had been doing well enough, and making money since our arrival in the town; but in half-an-hour after this he came to me.

"We must leave here to-night."

"What?" I answered.

He produced his pocket-knife, and began to trim his nails composedly.

"I cannot afford to lose Mdlle. Suzette," he explained, in his coolest style. "And I don't intend to if it can be managed. I mean to checkmate my lord."

I understood clearly enough then, of course; but I made no comment.

"It is the only way," he went on. "I know the foolish girl. That business of the ring looks badly for us, and he has money enough to give her as much trumpery as she can stand up under. And he will do it. He is one of your indifferent, lavish kind."

It seemed nothing but natural that there should be some trouble with the girl when she was told the news. When she came in that night, she found Mouncey putting the last few things in the trunks, and, on hearing her explanation, the woman said she turned pale, and began to cry in an excited kind of way.

"I don't want to go," she said. "It's so sudden. What is it all for?"

"Business reasons of Leroy's," answered Mouncey. "What ails you?"

"Nothing; only—only I don't like to be worried so. Where are we going?"

"I don't know."

"I wasn't going to tell her," she added afterwards. "She was sharp enough, silly as she is, to slip out to him again, or, at least, to send him word."

She fretted and pouted all that night, and showed ill-humour through the whole of the journey, which Leroy had taken care should be a longer one than usual. Mouncey had a comfortless enough time with her; and when we reached our stopping-place, it was two days

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before she would take her usual place in the performance again.

"Says her head aches," said Mouncey. "And I dare say it does after all that temper."

"Pooh!" commented Leroy tolerantly. "Leave her alone. She will be eager enough to show herself in a day or so."

And so she was. Petulant as her humour was, she found it dull work playing the invalid, and the accounts the rest brought her of the enthusiasm of the audience stirred her vain little soul within her. On the fourth day her headache disappeared, and she was ready to appear.

"She's safe enough now," said Mouncey, in a week's time. "Safe until the next one comes on the boards. She has let my lord drift into the background, and is full of nothing but the blue satin and silver Leroy has half promised her for the knife-trick."

She even became as friendly as ever with me, and acted quite as if she had forgotten her anger. The fact was that the people admired her so much that she had quite enough to make her happy. And it was no wonder that they admired her, for she grew prettier every day; prettier in the rose on her cheeks, and the gold of her hair, and the softness of her dark, dewy eyes. There wasn't a man or woman living who could have looked at her for the first without being fairly startled by the sight of so much beauty.

But I may as well cut my story as short as possible.

Leroy gave her the new suit, and Mouncey made it for her—a page's costume of blue satin, slashed with silver, and ornamented with pearl tassels and fringe, dangling and swaying as she moved.

She came out of the dressing-room the first night she wore it, just before we were to do the knife-trick, ready to go on in all her bravery. Mouncey had dressed her, and I'll own it upset me a bit, right at the beginning, just to look at her—all gloss of satin, and glow of colour, her little head running over with short, soft, baby curls; a half-shy, half-triumphant pout on her lips, her eyes full of delight.

She saw me stand watching her, and she came and stopped before me.

"Is it as pretty as the pink?" she asked.

"Yes," I said.

"Is it—is it prettier?"

"Yes."

She laughed; a breath of a laugh, as if she was so pleased with herself that she could not help it, and then she stood pluming herself like a bird, turning her head over her shoulders, this way and that, and touching up her pearl fringes, and the white feather in her cap, and the studded belt at her tiny, lissom waist.

"I wish it was time for us to go on," she said. "I don't like to wait."

And those were the last words I ever heard her speak.

They called us almost the next instant, and on we went.

The very moment the audience caught sight of her, they broke loose. They clapped and shouted and stamped, they even waved their hats and rose in their seats, and for several minutes there seemed nothing but to let her stand there bowing and dimpling, their eyes feasting on her.

But, of course, it stopped at last, and we took our places, she in her usual position against the screen, and I myself at the other end of the stage. It isn't easy to tell, you may be sure—that's what shortens my breath, and makes me break down here and there.

I threw straight enough for a while, straight enough and cool enough. My hand was as steady as it had ever been, until near the end.

It was the last knife I was going to throw—the very last—and she moved! I swear she moved!

She turned her eyes towards something in the audience, not far from us—someone who had just come in, and somehow she drew my eyes with her, and I saw too. I saw him—her lover himself—sitting a few feet beyond the stage, watching us; watching her as he had always done, with a light, cool smile upon his fair face.

It was the last knife, and I held it balanced in my hand; and I threw it, and it struck!

And there was a strange, sharp cry, and her little hands were tossed up wildly in the air, and she fell!

Good heavens! do you think any man could ever picture the least thrill of the madness that fell upon me?

There was a roar of voices, and a rush, and a kind of horrible shriek among the people; and some mounted their seats and denounced me in their first tempest of excitement; and some climbed the stage, and those who were behind ran on, and the women wrung their hands and sobbed in hysterical fright, and the men crowded round; and the first among all was her lover, who came near but did not speak, only stood by, with a white face, trying to hold still the shaking hand which held a crushed bouquet of lilies of the valley.

I had caught her almost as she fell, and I held her crushed against my breast, almost as he held the flowers, but my hand was red with the little stream which trickled from the triangular mark upon the side of her white temple.

The medical man who was brought in only bent over her a moment, and then stood upright.

"Dead!" he said. "Penetrated the brain. Stand back, you men, and let them carry her away!"

And they took her away from me, and left me empty-handed and panting. And all the crowd fell away and stared at me as if I had been a strange wild animal loose among them.

I don't know what I thought of, or if I thought at all, I don't remember. I know I turned from right to left, and shook as if an ague had seized me, and then my eye caught a glimpse of one man again, and my blood seemed to rush and boil in my veins.

"You fiend!" I shouted. "You fiend—it was you—it was you—it was you!" And I sprang at his throat and clutched him, and so seemed to fall into black darkness.

That is how it was, and that is all. She was dead, and I had killed her. "Accidental death!" the jury brought it in, with a censure upon the dangerous nature of my performance. And there were plenty who were sorry for me, and who were kind to me during my illness. It was worse for me than for her, some said. A pretty, innocent creature like that, they always added, "so pretty, and innocent, and young!" But, as I say to my self often, there is only one thing for me to remember, and I am not the man to forget it. She is dead, and the hand which struck her deathblow was mine—MINE!

Reginald Baird.

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RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

No. 4.

Although a large number of competitors entered for this competition, no one succeeded in solving all the problems. Mr. W. B. Early, 12, Willow Walk, Sydenham, solved 9¾, and Miss Elsie Daw, 6, Edith Road, St. Catherine's Park, S.E., solved 8½, to each of whom a guinea has been sent. Pencil-cases have been forwarded to the competitors whose names and addresses appear below, all of whom have solved over six problems out of the ten:

A. Trivess, 4, Graham Road, Southsea, Hants.
J. Moir, Blackhall, Pitmuxton, Aberdeen.
J. Trail Hill, 3, Merchant Street, Peterhead.
J. M. Ruddock, 2, Holt Hill Terrace, Birkenhead.
Mrs. M. E. Mennie, 99, Queen Street, Peterhead.
W. Almond, Mauldeth, Heaton Mersey, Manchester.
J. Read, 1, Florence Villas, Cavendish Road, Merton.
J. Gillispie, 105, St. Michael Street, Dumfries.
Mrs. A. Sellurs, 69, Clinton Road, Mile End Road.
B. H. Monnickendam, 175, Gloucester Road, Regent's Park.
C. B. Keston, 11, Queen's Road, Bayswater.
B. Crane, 183, Hollydale Road, Nunhead.
Miss M. Bennett, Steyne School, Worthing, Sussex.
W. Deeble, 25, Arwenach Street, Falmouth.
Miss E. Champs, 16, Prospect Hill, Walthamstow.
F. Bessant, 15, Eaton Place, Falmouth.
Miss M. Crockwell, The Convent, Adelphi House, Salford.
G. Russell, 68, Strahan Road, Bow.
A. James, Gorringe Park, Mitcham, Surrey.
W. C. Eyton, 80, Broad Street, Hanley, Staffs.
Mrs. Morrison, 31, Alexandra Road, Wimbledon.
W. S. Cool, 28, Thirsk Road, Lavender Hill.
T. H. Tripney, 50, Coniger Road, Fulham.
Miss B. Wood, Bower Lodge, Pyrland Road, Richmond.
W. Buchan, 9, Romford, Road, Stratford.
G. D. Taylor, 28, Ernest Street, Rhyl, North Wales.
W. Dawson, 23, Hewitt Street, Highton, Manchester.
J. H. Kidd, Mauldeth, Heaton Mersey, near Manchester.
Miss May, Curraghmore, Shanklin, Isle of Wight.
A. Whitworth, Manston, Mason's Avenue, Croydon.

KEY OF NO. 4 COMPETITION.

Key No. 31.

Mushroom.

Key No. 32.

Cone, ceil, cab, cable, one, once, co, cob, coca, coil, cove, coal, conceive, con, cole, coble, conceal, coeval, ob, on, ova, oval, oil, oca, nib, Nile, nil, neb, nab, eve, vale, able, ale, be, Eva, ab.

Key No. 33.

(a)
G OIN G.
A COR N.
B ABB I.
G BOW L.

(b)
G RAMPU S.
R ONDEA U.
A GITAT O.
M ACARON I.
I NAUGURA L.
N UNCI O.
I NTERLEA F.

Key No. 34.

1. Grim—y.
2. Thin—e.
3. O—s.
4. Olive—t.

Key No. 35.

£1 19s. 4$\frac{11}{11}$d.

Key No. 36.

MELODY.

Key No. 37.

a=b. e=f. i=j. o=p. u=v.

There is considerably less trouble in arranging a cypher sentence than there is in finding a solution to it.

Key No. 38.

Pearson's Weekly Cricket Club.
Dr. Jameson's Raid.
Home Notes, the ladies' favourite.

Key No. 39.

And he left with this one letter in his leather pouch, walking more quickly, for he had already been delayed too long, and the letter ought to be forwarded on by the first courier if it was to reach its destination early the next day.

Key No. 40.

Fjndjng. Value 147.

KEY OF NO. 3 COMPETITION.

RESULT PUBLISHED LAST WEEK.

Key No. 21.—$\frac{11}{11}$ths.

Key No. 22.

(1) 102 illustrations (2) 38 photographs.

Key No. 23.

"Heroes eventually find an opportunity for displaying their heroism."

Key No. 24.

G R A N T.
R A C E R.
A C A R A.
N E R V Y.
T R A Y S.

Key No. 25.

(a) 320. (b) £1 6s. 8d.

Key No. 26.

Gas.
Yet.
Mid.
Not.
Auf.
Son.
Ton.
Ion.
Cod.
Sod.

Key No. 27.

Mag—net—o—meter. Magnetometer.

Key No. 28.

(1) "Wisdom Let Loose." (2) "The Fresh Air Fund." (3) "The Liar."

Key No. 29.

The, he, 36 times.	What, hat, 2 times.	Chatter, hatter.
Brain, rain, 2 times.	That, hat.	Gas, as.
Will, ill, 6 times.	Many, man.	Hat, at.
Those, hose, 2 times.	There, here.	Fred, red.
One, on, 3 times.	Placed, laced.	Away, way.
Number, umber, 5 times.	Dashes, ashes.	Tail, ail.
Awarded, warded.	Whole, hole, 3 times.	First, firs.
Write, rite.	This, his, 2 times.	Turn, urn.
Simply, imply.	Her, he, 2 times.	With, wit.
Page, age, 3 times.	Their, heir, 2 times.	Done, one.
Cover, over.	Stories, tories, 2 times.	Ever, eve.
For, or, 3 times.	Year, ear, 2 times.	Marks, arks.
Mark, mar.	Measurer, measure.	Any, an.
Tour, our.	Changed, hanged.	Lumber, umber.
Glass, lass.	Form, for.	Son, so.
When, hen, 4 times.	Male, ale.	And, an, 3 times.

Key No. 30.

"Let us have done with such expeditions for ever, and turn our attention to urging upon our undesirable neighbours the advantages of emigration to the most unhealthy regions of Africa."

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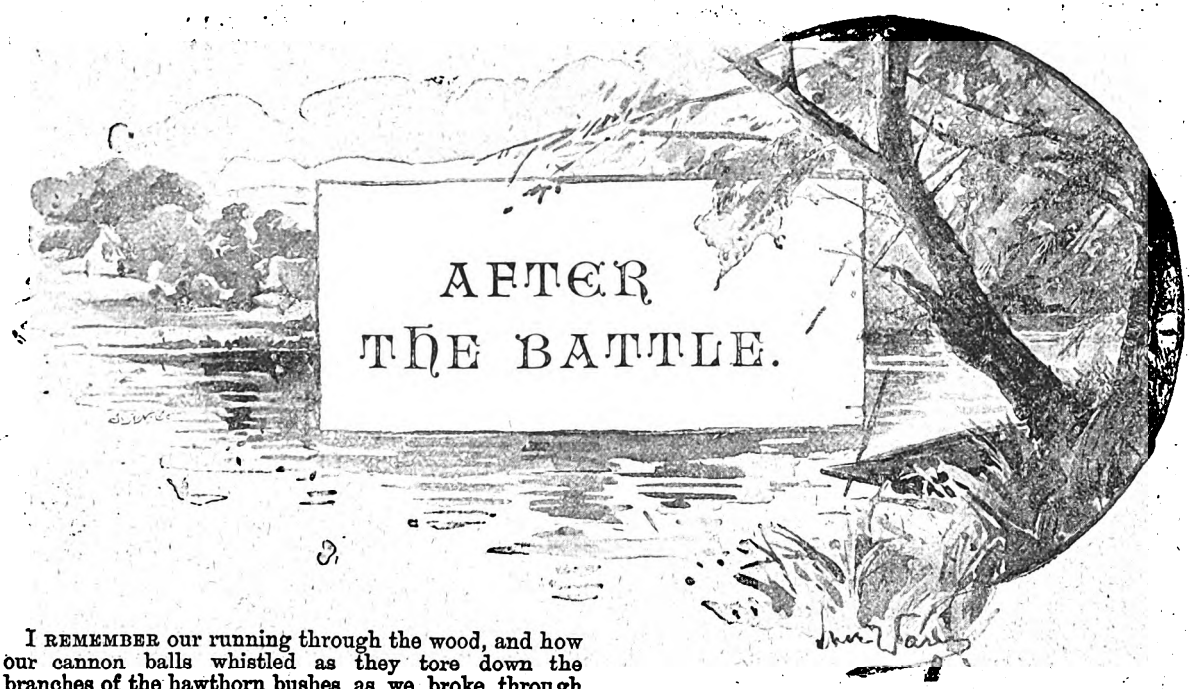

I remember our running through the wood, and how our cannon balls whistled as they tore down the branches of the hawthorn bushes as we broke through them. Beyond the border of the forest we could see something red flashing here and there. Sidoroff, a young soldier from the first battalion, suddenly fell to the ground, and silently looked at me with big, frightened eyes. Yes, I remember it very well.

I also remember the Turk, I noticed when we reached the clearing. He was tall and stout, and I was short and thin. I ran straight towards him. Something snapped. Something huge, as it seemed to me, flew past me. I heard it whistle. "He has shot at me," I thought. But he, with a wail of pain, leant against the hawthorn bush. With a blow I knocked the musket out of his hands. I heard him moan, and then I rushed on.

Our men cried: "Hurrah!" Some fell. Some gave fire. When I had left the wood, I also fired several times right on the plain. Suddenly the "hurrah!" grew louder, and we all rushed on—that is, not we, but our men, for I remained. This seemed strange to me, and yet more strange, that everything had disappeared and the noise had stopped. I heard nothing, but I saw a bit of blue colour before me, very likely the sky. After awhile this also had vanished.

I was never in such a funny state before. I am lying, it seems, on my stomach, and I see before me a bit of ground. A few grasses, little broken pieces of last year's herbs, and some ants crawling over them—this is all my world. And all this I see with but one eye; the other is closed with something hard—perhaps a branch on which my head rests. I feel very uncomfortable, and I want to move, but I do not understand why I am not able to. Time passes. I hear the noise of the grasshopper, the buzzing of the bee. At last I made an effort to free my right hand from under my body, and leaning with both hands on the ground I try to stand on my knee. Something sharp and quick as lightning passes through my body, and once more I fall. Once more darkness and nothingness.

I awake. How is it that I now see the stars shining brightly on the dark blue Bulgarian sky? Am I not in my tent? Why am I not there? I try to move, but I feel a torturing pain in my leg. Yes, I have been wounded in the battle. Dangerously? I touch my leg where I feel the pain. Both legs are covered with blood. When I touch them, the pain grows stronger. There is a noise in my ears, and my head is heavy. In a confused way I understand that I am hurt in both legs.

How did it happen? Why did they not pick me up? Is it possible that the Turks have beaten us? I try to remember what has happened to me, first in a confused manner and afterwards more clearly. I remember now that we were not beaten at all but that we began to run and that I had to drop down on the plain near the hill. Our commander had pointed to the plain: "Boys, we shall be there," he had called out. And we were there; that proves that we are not beaten. But why did they leave me? This is an open place where they could have seen me. They fired so often, very likely I am not alone. I must turn my head and see. I can do it so easily as this time I had fallen on my back—this accounts for my seeing the stars instead of the ground.

I raise myself into a sitting position, but this is hard work when both legs are wounded. Several times I have to rest, and the pain brings tears into my eyes. At last I sit up. Above me are the dark blue sky and the twinkling stars; around me seems something dark and high. My hair stands on end. I have fallen into the bushes and they have not found me. But how did I get here, when they shot at me on the plain? Very likely, driven by pain, I had rushed on. Strange? Now I am not able to move, and then I could run so far.

The big stars have grown paler and the little ones have disappeared; the moon is rising. How good to be at home! I hear strange sounds. It seems that, after all, there is somebody. Yes, that was a groan. Is there somebody near me, also forgotten, with wounded legs or a ball in his stomach? No, the groans are too near, for

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there is nobody so close to me. Good heavens, it is myself! Slow, plaintive groans! Am I really so bad? Very likely. But I hardly realise the pain, because there is a mist in my head, it feels like lead. I had better lie down and sleep. Sleep? Shall I ever wake up again? I hardly care.

Suddenly a broad streak of moonlight illuminates the place where I am about to lie down, and I see something dark and big lying at a few steps from me. Something on it glistens in the light of the moon. I recognise a brass button. Very likely a dead body or a wounded man. All the same to me, I lie down.

No, it cannot be! Our men have not left the field. They have beaten the Turks and have remained in this position. But why do I not hear the sound of voices or the crackling of fire? But then I am so weak that I am not able to strain my ears. Surely they are here.

"Help, help!" I call out.

Wild, hoarse sounds burst from my chest. They remain unanswered. All is silent around me. The moon has a mournful expression on her round face. I remember the bright buttons. "If he were alive, he would have heard my call. He is dead. Is he ours or a Turk? Oh, God, if it were not, all the same!" And sleep closes my weary eyes.

I am lying with shut eyes, although I awoke long ago. Through the thick branches of the hawthorn I feel the heat of the sun, and I do not care to open them. It is better not to move at all. Yesterday—was it yesterday?—I was wounded. One day has passed, others will pass, and I shall die. How good it would be not to think, but this is impossible. Thoughts and remembrances come to my mind, and besides, it will soon be over. They will publish that our losses were of no consequence. "Wounded, so many; killed, Ivanoff, a private from the volunteers." Perhaps they will not put the name. Simply: "Killed, one." A private! as if they would say "a dog."

It was long ago. All my life—that is, the life when I was not lying here—seems so long ago. I walked in the street, where I saw a crowd of people looking at something white, covered with blood. It was a pretty little dog, which had been killed by the tramcar. A man came and carried it away.

Will they carry me away, too? Or shall I remain here to die? How sweet life seems to me! When I saw the little dog that day, I had felt happy. Remembrance, why do you torture me? The past is happiness; the present misery. Home-sickness, thou art worse than all the wounds!

It is growing warm, the sun is burning. I open my eyes and I see the same bushes, the same sky, but in broad daylight. And there is my neighbour. Yes, it is a dead Turk. What a giant! I remember him; he is the man I killed. Why did I kill him? Why did he come here? Who is he? Like myself, he may have an old mother looking out for him. And I? And I also. Yes, I should like to change with him. He does not hear; he does not feel the pain of his wounds, anguish or thirst. The bayonet pierced his heart right through.

There is a great black hole in his uniform. This was done by me. I did not want to do it. I did not wish to harm anybody when I went to the war. I did not expect to kill people. I had thought more of exposing my own breast to the enemy's balls. And then? Fool, fool! And this wretched fellah (he wears the Egyptian uniform), his fault it was still less. He had never heard of Russia or Bulgaria. He was told to go, and he went. We attacked, he defended himself. Where is his fault, and why did I kill him? Why does thirst torture me? Who knows what that means? Even when we march through Roumelia, under a glaring tropical sun, I did not feel the thirst as I feel it now. Oh, if someone would but come!

Great Heavens! In his flask there may still be some water, but how to reach it? It will cost me agonies, but I must try. I begin to crawl. My feet drag. My weakened hands are hardly able to move the lifeless body. There are but a few steps to the dead body, but for me the distance seems endless. I must. My throat is parched and burns like fire. I should die soon without water, but I go on. Every movement is agony. I scream—I scream with sobs. At last I reach the flask. There is water enough to last me till I die. He whom I have killed saves me now.

I try to open the flask, but the effort is too great. I lose balance and fall right on the body of the dead Turk. I could smell the odour of decay. I took a long draught. The water was warm, but fresh, and would last me several days. I had read somewhere that a man could live a week without food if he had water. What if I lived several days longer? Our men are gone, the Bulgarians dispersed. There are no roads. Die I must, but instead of three days' suffering I shall suffer a week. Perhaps it would be better to end directly.

Near my neighbour lies his gun. I have but to stretch out my arm. One moment and all is finished. Shall I do it, or shall I wait? Deliverance or death? No, I shall have courage. I shall struggle on to the last. If they find me, I am saved. Perhaps my bones are not touched, and then they will cure me. I shall once more see my home, mother and Mary.

Oh, Lord, never let them know the truth! Let them think I was killed at once.

I am beginning to feel dizzy. My visit to my neighbour has entirely exhausted me. He is growing black and beginning to decay. What will become of him later? I can hardly bear the odour, and I am not able to move. The sun scorches my face and my hands. Nothing to cover me. If night would but come! This will be the second, I think.

My thoughts are growing confused.

I must have slept long for when I awoke it was night. My condition is the same. My wounds hurt. My neighbour, huge and lifeless. is still there.

I cannot help thinking of him. Is it possible that I have left all that is dear and precious to me, that I have come thousands of versts, have starved and frozen, and been tormented by heat and thirst, and am now lying here in agony only in order to kill this miserable Turk? Did I accomplish anything else besides this murder?

Murder—murderer! And who? I!

When I longed to join the army, my mother and sister did not keep me back, although they grieved deeply. I was sorry for them, but, blinded, I refused to see their tears. I did not understand how much I hurt them. Now I do.

If I could but bring back the past! How strange my conduct seemed to our friends.

"Madman, you do not know what you are doing!" they had said. How could they talk like this when our country was in question? Where was the love and patriotism they were constantly extolling? When I aimed at all these lauded virtues, why did they call me madman? I went with thousands of others, some of them like myself, as volunteers. A sharp morning

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wind stirring the bushes reminds me that this is my third day of suffering. The third! How many more? I am too weak to move away from the dead body. We shall soon be equals. I am thirsty. I shall drink three times a day, morning, noon and night.

The sun has risen. Its great circle, crossed and divided by the bows of the hawthorn, is red as blood. It will surely be warm to-day. My neighbour—what will become of him? He is terrible now. His hair is beginning to fall off; his dark, Egyptian skin has become yellow. What will the sun do with him to-day? To lie near him is impossible. I must move farther, however I shall have to suffer for it. I must, if it should take me hours to make a step.

The whole morning passes in the effort. The pain is terrible, but what is that to me? I have forgotten how it is to feel well. I have succeeded in reaching the old place, but even here I have the terrible odour of the decaying body, carried to and fro by the wind. It makes me sick. My empty stomach is shrinking. I am beginning to feel spasms. My whole interior turns with the terrible odour, which does not leave me for a moment. I have reached despair, and I weep—weep like an infant. Exhausted, all torn by the thorns of the bush, I feel almost unconscious.

Suddenly—is this a mistake—I hear talking and the stamping of hoofs I was going to scream, but refrained. If these should be the Turks! Then, to my own suffering, others still greater would be added. I have heard and read how the Turks tear off the skin and burn the wounds. Nothing worse than brutish men! Will it be better to end life in the hands of the Turks or here? But if they should be our men? Oh, these bushes! Why are they so thick? I can hardly see through them! There is one little place like a window which enables me to see in the distance. There seems to be the little brook where we quenched our thirst in the battle, and there is the big stone which was our bridge across the brook. They will surely come this way!

My hearing has grown so weak that I cannot distinguish the language which they talk. Lord! if they should be ours! I shall call out! They will hear me from the brook. Why does it take them so long? Impatience tortures me. I do not even notice the odour, although it is increasing, and suddenly Cossacks appear on the other side of the brook. The blue coats, with red stripes on the trousers, the Lancers, a whole battalion! In front, on a beautiful horse, the dark officer. As soon as they had reached the brook he suddenly commanded:

"Turn—march!"

"For heaven's sake, stop! Help! Help!" I scream, but the stamping of the hoofs and the general noise drown my rattling cries, and I am not heard. Oh, God, in my helplessness I fell with my face to the ground and I sob. From the overturned flask flows the water—my life, my salvation from death. After this I lost consciousness, and must have lain for many hours in this state, till at last a gust of wind blowing the terrible odour over me brought me to my senses. I looked at my neighbour. He had changed beyond expression. The first look at him nearly frightened me to death. I began to shiver when I looked at the skeleton in the uniform with the bright buttons. "This is war," I thought; "the representation of it!"

Once more the burning sun scorches my face and hands and causes me to feel thirsty. Not a drop of water is left in the flask. Why did I not scream louder? The Cossacks might have heard me. Even the Turks would be better than these pangs. Mother, darling mother! You would tear your hair if you knew. Good-bye, mother, sister—all!

Once more the little white dog. Why did I come here? To-morrow is the fourth day. How many more? Death, where art thou? Come and take me.

But death does not come. I have still to live and suffer. I am here under the burning sun, without a drop of water, and the nearness of the dead body is poisoning me. The worms have nearly finished him, and then they will be ready for me. The day passes and the night. The same thing. Another morning and another night.

There is a stir in the branches, and a noise as if they were talking. "You will die, die, die!" they whisper. "Never see again!" answer the bushes from the other side.

"From here you can see them!" says a loud voice near me.

I start and gain consciousness at once. Through the bushes I can see the kind, blue eyes of Iakoyley, our corporal, looking at me.

"Shovels!" he cried. "Here are two more, ours and theirs."

"No shovels! I don't need to be buried! I am alive!" I want to call out, but my throat is parched, and the closed lips are unable to utter a sound.

"Heavens! He is alive! Mr. Ivanoff. Boys, come here! Our young carine (master) is alive. Quickly call the doctor!"

Although one of my legs had to be operated upon, I have lived to tell and write of the terrible days I passed on the field of war.

LE VIER.

"The Willow Song," from MELODY.

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THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

No. 7.

Two Prizes of £1 1s. Each.

BELOW will be found the seventh batch of ten problems in the new series of "THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM." Two prizes of a guinea each is offered weekly to those competitors who answer correctly the greatest number of these problems. Consolation prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

RULES:

1. All solutions to be written on one sheet of paper.
2. Don't write the questions. Simply put the numbers and the answer against each.
3. Each set to contain the £100 coupon (found on second page of cover) for the current week.
4. All attempts to be in by Monday, June 22nd.
5. Mark your envelope "Gymnasium, Number 7."

(61.) The initials of the words defined below, when placed one on the other, form a word signifying "very fine."

Rhymes with "muff."
Rhymes with "wonder."
Rhymes with "nestle."
Rhymes with "clever."
Rhymes with "vane."
Rhymes with "cool."
Rhymes with "pink."
Rhymes with "hot."
Rhymes with "peel."

(62.) The verse given below is jumbled up in the following manner:

The letters of each word and the words of each line are transposed; each word and each line, however, is complete in itself.

Het rones osner noser oth eth fitalubeu
Morf lorof het ot gelinic lifigln sentcame
Rove het techs duner het ponteuancer
Yint her adeh morf tinyad teef reh ot.

(63.) The words defined below when placed one on the other read both across and downwards the same:

1. A part of the body.
2. Formerly.
3. Cooling dainties.
4. A resort.

(64.) The following sentence is written in cypher. Transcribe it.

Brfmthfu thfrf m mmn wlth snsa sn dfmd whn tn hlmsfaf hmth nnt smld "L dn fnjny rfmdlng *Shnrt Stnrlfs.*"

(65.) A pianist commences at 10 a.m. on Monday, June 29th, 1896, to play the piano from 10 to 2 and 3 to 7 every day, and depresses the keys at the rate of 360 a minute. Another pianist commences at 47 minutes past 12 p.m., on the same day, and strikes the keys at the rate of 384 a minute. At what time on what day will the second player have struck a number of keys equal to that struck by the first player?

(66.) The initials and finals of the words defined below, read downwards and upwards, represent a word signifying "with many teeth."

1. To lessen.
2. Not reserved.
3. A South American quadruped.
4. A fish.
5. Want of religion.
6. Quarrel.

(67.) CHARADE.

My first is a parentless child.
My second an expression of surprise.
My third an evidence of victory.
My whole a commendable institution.

(68.) Let A=£1 2s. 7½d.; e=£2 0s. 1½d.; i=2s. 10d.; o=1s. 3¾d.; u=£3 17s. 9¼d. What word in the first column on this page has the greatest money value, and what is that value? State the position of the word.

(69.) Make an anagram from the sentence:
AFTER THE BATTLE.

70.) How many times is the word PEARSON'S quoted in the June number of *Pearson's Magazine*, including the advertisement pages and cover?

PICTURE ✣ PUZZLE ✣ PRIZE.

No. 8.

£10 TO BE GIVEN AWAY.

On the opposite page is a puzzle picture composed of 88 squares. If these squares be rearranged in a certain order they will form a real picture.

We offer a prize of £10 for the correct solution. In order to give readers in all parts of the United Kingdom as equal a chance as possible, none of the solutions received will be opened until Thursday, June 18th, when all those received will be considered together. In the event of two or more correct solutions being included up to this time, the prize will either be given to the sender of the *neatest* one, or will be divided amongst the correct competitors at the discretion of the Editor. Consolation Prizes will also be awarded.

If no correct solution be received on or before Tuesday, June 23rd, 1896, the Ten-Pound Prize will be given to the sender of the solution then to hand which is most nearly correct.

Pictures should be packed flat or folded, not rolled, and the outside wrapper must be marked "Puzzle Number 8."

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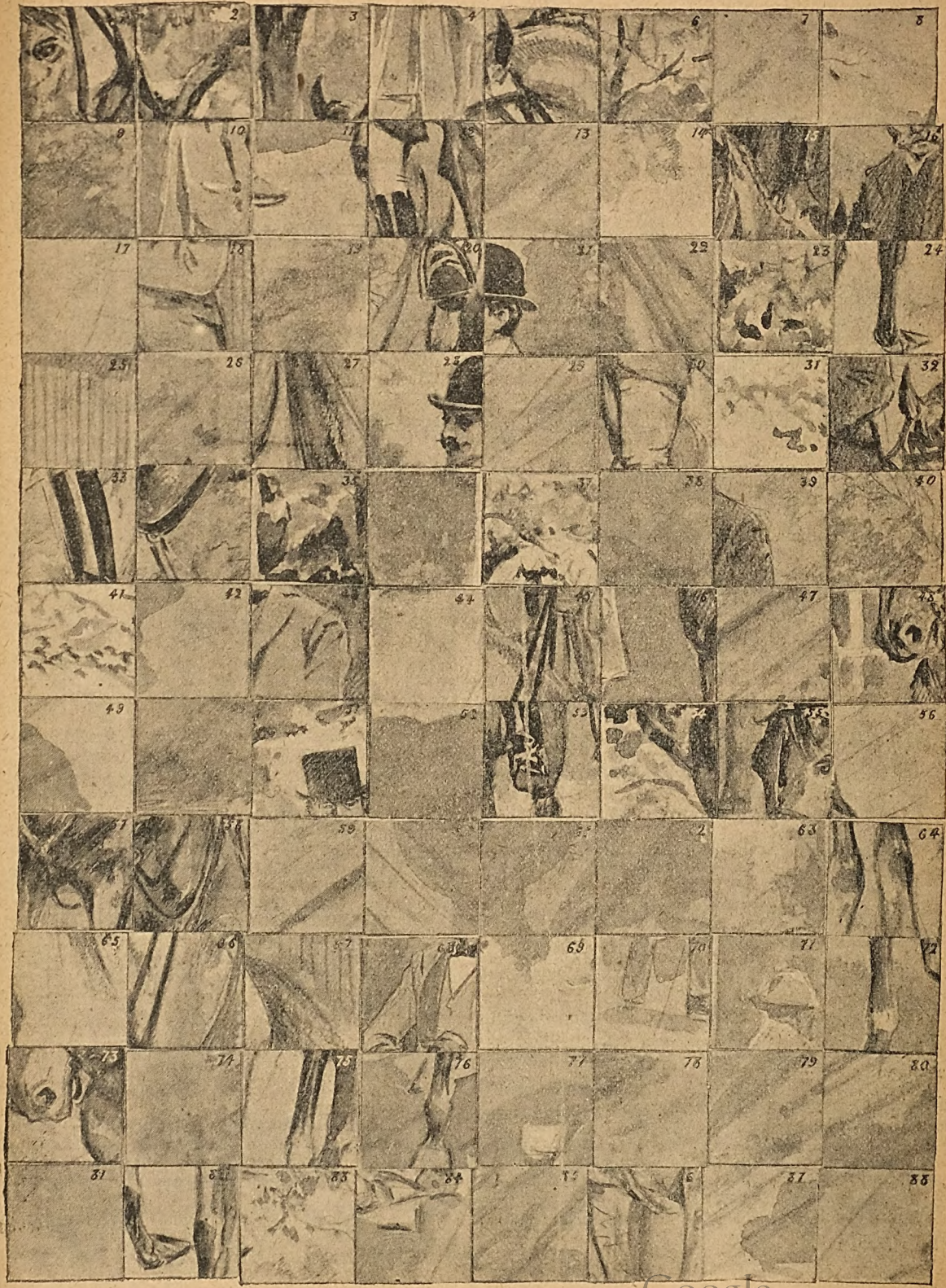

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A MODERN SATURNALIA.

A Story of the Moscow Tragedy.

"It has been like a scene in a fairy tale," sighed Lady Zoë, clasping her little white hands. "I shall never forget this, my first visit to Moscow!"

She spoke to a fair-haired boy of eighteen, slender in form, yet strong of feature.

He had the brow of a statesman, so his mother declared. He would live to be as great as his father, the celebrated Hamilton de Falbe.

"Yes," he replied, gazing at the lovely Lady Zoë. "One does not find oneself in a charmed city every spring; you do not see a coronation every day!"

The girl smiled.

"No, indeed. London is my home, but now that I have basked in the splendour of a Russian Court, I wonder that my mother could ever have left it to marry an English nobleman. My heart goes out to these people; I would I were a man and the Tsar!"

The youthful enthusiasm of the Lady Zoë seemed reflected in young De Falbe's eyes. Yet he drew a deep breath as he replied:

"It is not always fairyland. You little know what you say when you envy the ruler of a nation!"

"To-morrow," said Lady Zoë, "is the 'grand folks' festival.' What a glorious day for the people! *We* cannot realise it, who are feasted night after night. I wish just for twenty-four hours I could change places with one of the poorest waifs, and feel his joy when he presses forward in the crowd of humanity to receive his presentation cup—his bread and sausage! Has it ever struck you, Hamilton, that after all I am little better than a prisoner, always guarded by a watchful attendant. Sometimes I think I would give my right hand to know—if only for a day—what real liberty meant."

She stretched out her arms, and the gesture reminded the boy of a starling freshly entrapped in a cage, beating its wings against the bars.

He took her hand reverently, and raised it to his lips.

The young Lady Zoë drew closer to his side.

"You *do* love me!" she whispered, flashing at him one of her ravishing glances.

With all the energy of youth, her boyish admirer swore everlasting fidelity.

"Dearest, I would die for you!"

The high-flown sentiment amused the girl. She laughed merrily.

"I don't want you to die, but I have thought of a wonderful scheme in which you might help me. I want to know what *real* life means—to disguise myself as a peasant, and mingle in a Russian holiday for the million! Ah, you look startled; it needs some daring I know. The crowd will be gigantic, almost terrible! Every phase of the lowest life—the poorest possible moujiks and peasants—will be heart to heart with us in the crush. No state ball will have ever held such a splendid feast of novelty. Imagine, Hamilton, you and I, garbed as the lower classes like wild, mad merry-makers, let loose on the Khodynski Plain, amidst dancing shops, music booths, and acres of merry-go-rounds! All ceremony thrown aside, we shall see a spectacle that will serve us with thought till we are old and grey!"

In her craving for a new sensation, the reckless Lady Zoë imparted her daring thirst for adventure to the susceptible spirit of the boy—talking down his protestations, ridiculing his calmer judgment, till she fired it with her own enthusiasm.

"I have obtained the garments," she whispered, "in which we are to escape. My maid thinks I am taking them home for use in private theatricals. You are to be a brown bearded moujik in the national red blouse. Is it not an intoxicating plan?"

Half fearful of the enterprise, yet too proud to be outdone by a girl, Hamilton de Falbe flung himself into the scheme, the victim of her startling whim.

"I am named Zoë after my great aunt," she said, "and all the Zoës in our family have been half crazy creatures, and I must live up to their reputation." Her eyes sparkled as she spoke. "The last Zoë did an awful thing—she—but no, I must not tell you—you are too young!"

The boy bit his lip. Then she laid her hand caressingly upon his arm.

"I was only teasing," she whispered. "I will give you the whole story in detail *after* the fête on the Khodynski Plain."

No sleep that night for Lady Zoë or her bold cavalier.

With great dexterity they evaded their guardians and attendants, and garbed as a peasant maid, by five o'clock in the early morning, the only daughter of an English

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nobleman was struggling through a good-natured, happy crowd of merry-makers. Hamilton clasped her closely in his encircling arm, as with the whole vast concourse they made for the booths.

"I'll get my coronation package if I die for it," she murmured gaily, scanning in wonder the strange foreign visages around her. "What harm is there in becoming one of these inoffensive, pleasure-seeking people?"

"The populace of all the villages round Moscow are hemming us in," laughed the boy undaunted. "We are paying for our beer and honey!"

The pressure grew worse and worse as these veritable "babes in the wood" were hustled with the mob. Even the light-hearted Zoë felt her head reel, and her breathing break forth in laboured gasps, as she stumbled along over the irregular ground. The workmen were rushing in from the manufactories, and their violence awoke terror in the tenderly-nurtured English girl.

In the appalling crush they were being positively hurled towards the sheds where the presentation mugs and free meals awaited the greedy masses, while amidst the rush of the people, Zoë and her escort were in imminent danger of being trampled under foot.

On—on—pressed the seething congregation, ever faster, ever denser! Some were disputing and striking each other in hot rage, many faces blanched livid with fear, as cut and bleeding they hastened forward to the goal.

"Oh! take me home for the love of Heaven," pleaded Zoë suddenly. "Hamilton, I am frightened, let us go back—quick—quick!"

Rash as her request appeared, Zoë's word was law. Without questioning the inadvisability of the proceeding young De Falbe turned against the stream.

The utter impossibility of making their way back now broke upon the girl's strained nerves, and losing her head completely in the crowd, she battled against the burning breath of tens of thousands, uttering piercing shrieks that rent the air. Her hysterical cries were the signal for a panic, and those behind hearing her screams, pushed eagerly forward—a mighty wave of impulsive humanity!

The women took up Zoë's cries, and in a moment a scene, painted in all its gruesome horror by the papers of to-day, so terribly tragic in its frenzied realism—broke across that plain of death! The seething mass went mad, there on the battlefield of fate they were fighting in anguish for light, space, freedom—escape!

Hamilton, though sparely built, seemed in that dread moment endowed with superhuman strength. He raised Zoë half fainting on his shoulders, and as if the sight of her helpless frame and beautiful features involuntarily compelled them, the strongest men formed round her and the boy. Like lions they fought with those, who, regardless of death-groans, beat their way on to plunder the line of booths. One, taller than the rest, snatched the fair girl from the failing arms of the still undaunted youth and bore her away.

The red blouse of Hamilton de Falbe was torn in shreds from his body, which, bleeding and mangled, sank with a groan to the earth.

"*Zoë!*" he cried, "*Zoë!*"

In the midst of the uproar, through fevered dreams, she heard the name, and a moment later forty or more bodies had swelled the heap of slain beneath which he lay. It was not in vain he had pledged his word: "Dearest, I would die for you!"

Then came a series of confused visions in the girl's brain. She was still borne on by the arms of strong men; groans and shrieks rang in her ears. She opened her eyes and saw that troops of firemen were carrying the victims to transport waggons. After this came a brief spell of insensibility, and later on the jolting over stones back into the city.

When she fairly awoke from her faint, it was to find herself in St. Catherine's Hospital. The nurse bending over her appeared surprised when the poor peasant girl spoke in English.

"Where is Hamilton?" she asked, starting up—"Hamilton de Falbe?"

"I don't know. What is your name?" answered a soft voice in Lady Zoë's native tongue.

"Never mind. We went to the fête for a joke, Hamilton and I." The girl raised herself on her elbow as she spoke, her cheek flushed, her eyes bright. "What happened? Why am I here? It was only a joke—*only a joke!*"

She repeated the words vehemently, but the nurse, herself sick at heart, could hear nothing but the piteous cries in the streets without, of a distracted and mourning multitude calling aloud:

"*Boje moi! Boje moi!*" (My God! my God!) The girl leapt from her bed, the horror of memory rushing back.

"I led him to his death, I killed Hamilton!" she said, speaking firmly, "*for the sake of a new sensation!*"

Her words were bitter—all the youth in her eyes died, while the life-long misery of regret froze her heart. Wrapping the torn shreds of clothing round her, she swept past the nurse with steady tread, hands clasped, and lips compressed.

Her mind was no longer confused. "Hamilton's murderess," she thought with painful irony, "must go to Hamilton's mother, and tell her about the *joke!* Oh! those happy, happy dead! It is the living who are accursed, and the saved who must suffer!"

So Lady Zoë escaped again in her rags, draining to the dregs her coveted cup of liberty.

WINIFRED GRAHAM.

A new Serial Story will commence in an early number of *Short Stories*, entitled, "**Pauper Blue Blood,**" from the pen of MISS WINIFRED GRAHAM, Author of "When the Birds Begin to Sing," "Through the Valley," "Six First-Class Passengers," etc., etc.

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AN INDIAN DRUG.

BY HUAN MEE,

Author of "The Czar's Diamond," "In Masquerade," "Alan Lindow's Wife," "Philip St. Voullé's Understudy," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VIII. (*continued.*)

HE has finished the review of the evidence, and now the jury only await his final words, while the thought runs through every mind: "Will they be for or against the prisoner."

The silence is fearful, agonising to all. He waits so long that anxious eyes are turned towards him as he sits, weighing in the balance his concluding words.

At last he sits erect again, and, like one deep breath, a smothered sigh of boiling excitement escapes the crowd.

"Gentlemen," he says, "I have laid the conflicting features of this trial as clearly before you as my power will admit. I have endeavoured to act justly and nothing more, making neither too much of one point, or too little of another, but submitting in true and proper order the whole of the evidence for and against the prisoner. It is for you in the impartial carrying out of your duties as citizens, to say whether this evidence points to the guilt or innocence of the prisoner charged with the terrible crime of murder. Let your council be marked by an undisguised endeavour to do justice and nothing more. That the ancient punishment, 'a life for a life,' is still demanded to-day must not weigh for or against the accused, for it is only for you to decide 'guilty or not guilty,' and for the law of the land to mete out stern and unfaltering judgment. Gentlemen, it is in your hands this mighty decision is left. May your council be a true and righteous endeavour to arrive at a verdict which shall be the honest verdict of you all, neither influenced by extraneous matters or by the opinion of others.

"Let each man act and judge for himself, and return a verdict according to the dictates of his own conscience. Guilty or not guilty. There can be no other decision."

With faces grave and set the jury solemnly rise and file from the box, the Judge retires, the prisoner passes from the dock, and a babel of voices immediately rises from the body of the Court.

Slowly the clock ticks off the minutes—one hour, then thirty minutes more.

What has happened!

The crowd has finished its excited converse; there is dead silence; and then the Judge enters again, the prisoner takes his stand in the box, and the jury return.

Nothing yet.

The Foreman says the jury desire the Judge shall read certain portions of his notes, which is done, and again they retire.

Then another hour, an hour of leaden minutes, and the jury once more re-enter, while beside the Judge there stands the Chaplain.

The man who is to say "Amen," if the verdict should be against the prisoner.

The prisoner stands swaying from side to side as his hands grip the edge of the dock in front of him, his face pale and fixed, and his eyes glaring with fearful intensity at the twelve men who are to decide his fate.

For a moment there is silence, and then the formal question is put: "Gentlemen, have you agreed upon your verdict?"

Like a rifle bullet in the crowded court comes the answer "No."

The jury have disagreed, there is no hope of a verdict ever being arrived at by them, and a torrent of applause breaks loose.

Calmly the Judge asks if they desire additional information, if they will retire longer and further consider the matter; but the Foreman replies it is useless, utterly impossible that they can ever agree, and so the case for the present ends.

The prisoner falls back fainting and helpless, the jury are dismissed, the Judge retires, the crowd disperses, and for a time all is over, but the gloomy horror will have to be repeated, and perhaps repeated again, until twelve men, with one unanimous voice, can decide the question: "Guilty or not guilty?"

CHAPTER IX.

A DISCOVERY.

"THE Maythorn Murder" trial had become a thing of more than local interest now. Throughout the length and breadth of the land the telegraphic wires had flashed the evidence of the most sensational case of the decade. The local Press had filled column upon column with verbatim reports, and the big London dailies had given a comprehensive condensation of the proceedings. For a whole week the populace of Maythorn had been in a state of tension, and now that the result, and to nearly everyone the unexpected result, of a disagreement amongst the jury was known a revulsion of feeling had set in and there were not wanting those who, the day before the most determined in their belief and assertion of the prisoner's guilt, were now ready, since twelve of their fellow countrymen had failed to arrive at a unanimous verdict, to admit that "there might be doubts," and Estlin Godfry was entitled to the benefit of them.

Indeed there were a few, a very few, who were already indulging in the favourite weakness of the sensation-loving public and were following the reprehensible but not unfrequent custom of elevating a criminal into a hero, a murderer into a martyr, admiring with a warped species of admiration the man who they assumed was clever enough to commit such a crime and leave no positive trace behind. Let it be said in their excuse they were only those who had heard the evidence from third parties, for those who had patiently listened to the long trial, to the mass of evidence, to the speeches of the learned counsel for the prosecution, and the able advocate for the defence, and had heard the clear, impressive, and impartial summing-up of the Judge, were for the most part in accord with the jury's decision that an agreement was impossible. But a disagreement meant a new trial, and it behoved the defence to be more active still, and try and throw a few more grains into the scale in Estlin Godfry's favour.

From morning till night they laboured, every possible and impossible line of defence was considered, and the well-known ground gone over again and again, the same road trodden to the same end, disappointment, a long, long lane with no turning.

The best detectives that London possessed had been enlisted on the side of Estlin Godfry, and many an individual was "shadowed" unknown to himself, shadowed for days, in the vain hope that something might arise to throw light even at the eleventh hour upon the mystery.

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But human patience and human skill were powerless, and the day of the new trial drew nearer with nothing further upon the side of the defence, and for all Estlin's friends knew, more powerful machinery still prepared for his destruction by the prosecutors of the State. The prosecutors of the State, who, acting under the authority of the Home Office, were no doubt instructed to obtain a verdict because in the minds of those in authority, murder had been committed and justice must be done. Who shall blame them? The administration of the law may be faulty, human intelligence has its limits, and in its short-sightedness may err, but for the safety of mankind the felon must be punished, the murderer must die. It is no vindictive action, it is the justice of man to man, the law of civilisation. Those who take life shall forfeit their own.

The coroner's jury who first inquired into the death of Joseph Monro had gone as far as their duty called them; they had found that he was poisoned, and in the further fulfilment of that duty had named who was, in their eyes, the murderer. The duty of the State was to give effect to their verdict, to accord a full and fair trial to the accused, and it had done so. The result so far had been a disagreement, then the dread horror must be gone through again and conviction or acquittal secured. Guilty or not guilty, there was no other way.

Once more, in the room behind the chemist's shop, Larrance and Shenfield sit opposite each other and discuss the painful story; once more they examine every link of the interminable chain that had been wound round and round Estlin Godfry, and, try as they will to put it from them, they cannot but fear that the new trial will result in his condemnation. Friends as they are of the accused, nay his partisans, the staunch believers in his innocence, they see how impossible it is to expect acquittal.

"I would give," Larrance is saying, "half what is left of my life to prove his innocence."

"And I would give every penny I possess, relinquish all my dreams of fame, my hopes of future recognition for my discoveries to see him free again."

A lad entering the shop at that instant, Larrance is left alone for a minute or so; he gazes through the glass door as Shenfield supplies the want of his customer. Shenfield is standing by the very spot where the poison was upset and as he turns to re-enter the room, the flash of inspiration, the gleam of intuition Larrance had waited and hoped for comes. Good God! could it be possible? They would, perhaps, hang Estlin on circumstantial evidence when here where they had strived so often to find the clue and failed, here, if his intuition were right, was a far wilder and more improbable circumstance that would save him and give him back, amid the cheering of his friends, to life and freedom.

The flush of excitement upon Larrance's face surprises Shenfield when he returns.

"Have you some idea?" he asks, "some hope at last?"

"Hope! more than hope; I think I see the truth. Shut the shop, there's not an instant to lose now."

The excitement of Larrance is contagious and in a few minutes the shutters have hidden the red flaring eye, and those who passed the door of Walter Shenfield's shop that night might, had they chosen to listen, have heard, not the secret of the Maythorn mystery, that Sidney Larrance had at last fathomed, but the sound of hammers and the sharp, shrill noise of a saw as its hungry teeth scrunched through woodwork.

Next morning a new sensation was afforded to the town, for the chemist's shop remained closed, its owner was not visible, and no legend upon the shutters acquainted the passer-by of the cause of this unprecedented occurrence.

While the wondering crowd stands gaping round the closed door of Walter Shenfield's establishment in Maythorn, the proprietor himself and Sidney Larrance are closeted in London with the solicitors for the defence, who listen with attentive ears to the astounding opinion that Sidney Larrance is enunciating.

Then cabs are requisitioned and they drive with all speed to the Home Office, carrying with them a bulky package, that Larrance never loses sight of. The urgency of their case obtains them an immediate audience with the constituted authorities, and little difficulty is experienced in securing permission to institute a thorough search through the contents of the writing-table in the study of the late Mr. Monro, which had been sealed by the police after the event, acting upon instructions communicated to them by the Treasury.

A messenger is dispatched to Scotland Yard for an able representative to be present at the investigation in the study. The Indian expert is telegraphed for, and arrives carrying a small square box with a perforated zinc top containing a couple of live rabbits, then the earliest possible train is taken to Maythorn, and the party drive from the station to Merton House, where already summoned by wire they find awaiting them the Inspector of the local police, Dr. Hill, and Mr. Grindley. They silently mount the stairs to the study, and the door is closed and locked, the detective taking the precaution to remove the key and block the keyhole from inquisitive eyes by covering the aperture with a square of black court-plaster which he takes from his pocket-book.

CHAPTER X.

THE TRUTH.

FROM the *Maythorn Chronicle*, Saturday, October 18th:

Truly the age of miracles is not yet past, for we have had one performed in our very midst, so astounding and so remarkable that all that is left us to do is to sit and wonder how so great a thing has come to pass. Inscrutable are the workings of Providence; we can only accept its decree with thankfulness that those who mete out the laws of this country have been saved from yet another judicial murder, stayed from doing yet another innocent man to death, by the accidental discovery of evidence sufficient to prove his entire innocence a thousand times over.

Why is it that the whole world does not shrink from capital punishment upon merely circumstantial evidence? Judicial murder simply for the love of vengeance? A month ago a jury disagreed, and failed to find a verdict at the first trial of Estlin Godfry, in what proportion we cannot say, but let those who pressed for a verdict of 'guilty' then, thank the more merciful of their body that they have saved them from the deliberate murder of a man for a crime of which he was completely innocent. We are abolitionists. We frankly avow it, and while such cases as these exist, can never alter our opinion.

Without recapitulating the evidence, well known doubtless to all, upon which this young man, Estlin Godfry, was placed upon trial for his life, let us review the one and only day of the second trial—the day which saw the man set free who might have been dead, hanged, murdered a week ago.

Never has the Court been so crowded as upon that day, never have we heard the whole mass of people rise upon the conclusion of a case, and unchecked, unawed by the ponderous majesty of the law, give vent to their feelings as only Englishmen can with one wild, hearty cheer of true enthusiasm, the enthusiasm of fair play, our ever cherished birthright. That a great and new point was to be put in evidence upon that morning was in some occult way known to all, but upon which side was unknown, and the crowd waited eagerly for the opening of the case.

One glance at the prisoner as he entered was sufficient; there was no doubt upon which side now. The sparkle of excitement glowed in his eyes, but his face had none of the drawn horror of the last terrible proceedings, and as though they had received an electric shock the onlookers thrilled as they wondered what had been discovered, and where was the false link in the extraordinary chain of circumstantial evidence which so tightly encompassed Estlin Godfry a month ago.

Excitement upon excitement, sensation upon sensation, the case is opened in a few words by the Judge, who speaks of new

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developments, and instead of the counsel for the Crown, the learned Q.C. for the defence rises and proposes to at once call a witness. There is no demur; the learned counsel for the Crown bows and smiles to his opponent, who bows again. As a lesson in legal deportment it is a pretty sight; in a murder trial it is unique. The counsel for the prisoner calls one witness, Sidney Larrance, and a tall broad shouldered fellow unceremoniously elbows the briefless striplings and enters the box. How we should like to pile up column after column in admiration of Sidney Larrance. A giant in form and intellect, a man who had worked untiringly and found nothing, and then, like a lightning flash, by a brilliant stroke of genius discovered a clue and worked it to a proof that had established the innocence of his friend before the Home Office had had time to gasp for breath. Hercules, we salute you; you have overthrown the slowest and most ponderous machine of modern times.

With the utmost straightforwardness, speaking in a calm steady voice, as though his story was of a most everyday character, he gives his evidence. He had worked hard for weeks to help his friend, but in vain. He had failed, and up to the very last moment of the trial had discovered nothing. After that trial, when the jury disagreed, he went again to the shop of chemist Shenfield, there to talk and further discuss with him, still looking for a loophole of escape for Estlin. He had always thought Estlin Godfry innocent, he says—never doubted it for a moment, and, strange to say, there is loud applause in Court! What a fickle thing is the great British Public! Led gently on by counsel, Sidney Larrance comes back to the point. He owns, does this giant, that he suffers from presentiments, and has a wonderful intuition, and, although we are prepared to hear his lordship say that neither of these gifts can be admitted as evidence, he makes no sign, but, more wonderful still, nods encouragingly towards the witness.

"While we were standing talking," the witness continues, "a boy entered the shop, and Shenfield left me for a moment to attend to him. The boy made a small purchase, handing a penny in payment, and as Shenfield left the counter to return to me, he dropped the coin through a slit into the till. A slit that had been cut in the mahogany top of the counter in order to avoid the necessity of opening the till drawer when change was not required. In that instant the whole solution of the mystery, like a flood of molten fire, surged upon my brain, and I stood breathless, flushed, astounded at the revelation."

With an inspired gleam of enthusiasm the witness gazes around the Court expecting to see every face brighten as at last the true explanation of the great mystery was put into their very hands, but desire as we may to say that frantic cheering echoed through the building, we must, with a due regard to veracity, state that only utter bewilderment was expressed on every countenance, and that our brains were unable to follow as yet the reasoning of him of gigantic frame and intellect.

A section cut from the counter of Walter Shenfield's shop was then brought into court and examined by the jury with perplexed interest, also a model of the shop showing the position of the counter and the till. Oh, the excitement of those few moments. What a new sensation for our worn-out lives. We felt we were on the eve of a grand discovery; we held our breath and hoped that the counsel for the defence would lay the case before us as gradually as possible, making the most of every point as it came along, until the light that we as yet were blind to, burst upon us in one glorious flood.

For a time at least the evidence of Sidney Larrance seemed to be over. The eminent Q.C. for the defence rose and impressively tapped the section of the counter.

"Gentlemen," he said, "in the model of the shop you will see a portion of the counter marked number one, that is the section you have examined, and it is upon that part that a bottle of deadly poison was upset upon the night previous to the sudden death of Mr. Joseph Monro, who died by poisoning by that identical drug. Upon the charge of murdering his uncle, Joseph Monro, my client, Mr. Estlin Godfry, is before you to-day, the chief evidence against him being the fact that that bottle, now destroyed, belonged to him, and that he had two other bottles containing more of this deadly extract. I shall now call witnesses necessary for the placing of sufficient evidence before you to enable you to at once acquit him."

What an assertion. Then an acquittal was certain. Excitement boiled faster than ever. The witnesses which followed, and their evidence point by point is laid before our readers in the full report of the proceedings in this issue, let us hasten to the *dénoûment*. At last it came. Weary, formal evidence was over, and again the counsel for the defence rose.

"Gentlemen," he said, "upon this identical spot the animal in its death struggle upset the unstoppered phial." He fumbled for a moment and then produced a tiny bottle from his vest pocket. "This phial," he continued, "is identical in size, the only difference being that it contains nothing more deadly than water from our local waterworks. It stood upon this spot," and he placed the bottle upon the section of the counter. "Gentlemen, carry your minds back to that night. The two men watch the animal to which the poison has been administered, it dies almost without a shiver, and shocked for the moment they place it down upon the counter. It is dead. But no, it convulsively rolls over once and—murders Joseph Monro. So!"

He unstoppered the phial and then deliberately tipped it over with his finger; it fell upon the counter, and the water was spilled. He paused for a moment and gazed at the bewildered faces in the Court, and then with a dramatic gesture suddenly dragged the till drawer open and held it towards the Court, showing where a few wet spots marked the descent of the fluid as it had trickled through the slit in the counter.

What a gasp of amazement. People were too far gone to applaud, they simply sat and gazed before them, wondering if it were not all a dream, a dream from a sensational novel.

"Gentlemen," the counsel continued, and his voice seemed to arouse to life the stunned faculties of the jury, "in that till upon that night lay half-a-dozen postage stamps face downwards, and as the poison trickled through the few drops fell upon the gum, dried during the night, and in the morning these very stamps were purchased from the chemist by the late Mr. Joseph Monro. There are now two remaining. Two were used by the deceased, two were experimented with by experts with fatal results upon the animals treated, and two we have here."

Why trouble our readers by further recapitulation of evidence or technical points? Let us leave that and speak of the wild scene which followed when the crowd without took up the cheers of those within. Deafening applause within the very precincts of the Court itself which a learned Judge showed no disposition to check. Let us speak of the intense excitement in the town when Estlin Godfry was a free man once more, of the crowd surging round and wringing his hand again and again. Let us write of the natural joy of the people that an innocent man had not suffered wrongly, but let us not forget amidst it all that surely such a case as this is the greatest argument of all against circumstantial evidence, for every innocent man does not have upon his behalf, as advocate, a friend inspired by Providence with an intuition so marvellous as to shatter to atoms the whole evidence of the Crown by one swinging blow from the sledge hammer of Truth.

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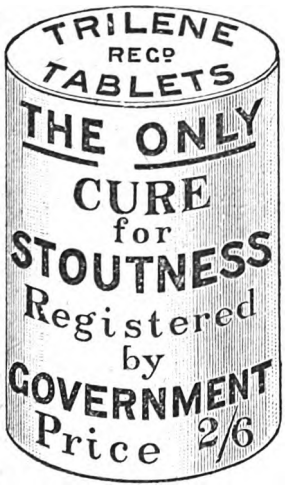

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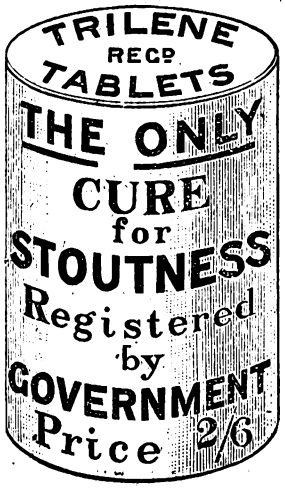

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This gun is the cheapest in the world. It is not a toy, but a practical well-made **Saloon Gun**, 37in. long, weight about 4½lb. **100 Birds or Rabbits** can be killed with it at cost of **1/6** only with shot cartridges, or **6/-** per 500. Will penetrate a deal board 1in. at 50 yards. Can also be used in the house as a **Target Rifle**, with NOISELESS Cartridges at **1/-** per 100, or **5/-** per 1,000. This gun is fitted with a beautifully finished stock, nickel-plated fittings, etc., etc. **Price 7/6** with **100 Ball Cartridges.** Each gun is tested, regulated, and proved before sent to customer. **The "Union Jack" Pistol** (Registered), with 100 Ball Cartridges, price **4/6**, or pair for **8/-**. **Block Action Saloon or Garden Guns** (very superior manufacture) with 100 ball cartridges: No. 1 Bore, **12/6**; No. 2 Bore, **13/6**; No. 3 Bore, **15/6**. No. 3 Bore at 15/6 will kill a bird on the wing at 35 to 45 yards. Send for Price Lists of Air Guns, Saloon Guns, sporting novelties and ammunition. If you cannot send to-day, cut this advertisment out, and write some other time. ADDRESS—**W. R. JACKSON**, Wholesale Arms and Ammunition Dealer, **Tottenham, MIDDLESEX.** (*Mention this Paper.*)

Every Young Man can positively and speedily cultivate a **HEAVY, HANDSOME MOUSTACHE,**

"I USED IT."

By a few applications of **Knowles' "Esauline,"** the newly-discovered Hair-Forcing Specific. Success guaranteed. "ESAULINE" thickens the growth of the Moustache, is an infallible cure for falling off of the Hair, weak or thin Eyebrows, Premature Baldness, etc., and as a general Hair Producer and Restorer is absolutely unrivalled. Will not stain or injure the most delicate Skin. Highly recommended for Children's Hair. From all Chemists and Hair Dressers.

Post Free, Prices, 1s. 6d., 3s., or 5s.

T. KNOWLES & CO.,

330, HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON.

ARE YOU FAT?

DR. GORDON'S Elegant Pills are the only Safe and Lasting Cure for Stoutness, Abdominal or General. State height, weight, and send 2/9, 4/6, or 11/- to Dr. Gordon, 24, Hart St., London, W.C.

READ! READ! READ!

Miss Roberts, "Brooklyn," Spotland Road, Rochdale, says: "I am 21in. round waist—before taking your Pills, 27in." Mrs. Cox, "Hazelhurst," Brondesbury Road, N.W.: "The last supply reduced me 14lb. in month without change of diet." P. Bendelow, 59, Dorset Street, Bolton: "Your Pills greatly reduced my weight." H. I. Cooper, 17, Somers Road, Southsea, says: "Your Pills reduced me 2 stones." Mrs J. Maskery, of Shirley, Derby: "I have lost nearly 3 stones in weight." Miss Nappey, Wood Lane, Headingley: "I have lost 18lb."

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And Head Noises Relieved by Using **Wilson's Common-Sense Ear Drums.** A new scientific invention, entirely different in construction from all other devices. Assists the deaf when all other devices fail, and where medical skill has given no relief. They are safe, comfortable, and invisible; have no wire or string attachment. Write for Pamphlet. Mention this Paper.

Wilson Ear Drum Co. Agent: **D. H. WILSON,**

Drum in position, **7, Newington Road, Edinburgh.**

NEW HARRISON Swift Gold Medal KNITTER.

KNITS Stockings ribbed or plain, Gloves and Clothing in Wool, Silk, or Cotton. Instructions Free. Lists free per post. 25 Triumphant Awards, including 7 Gold Medals, for the "Harrison" and "Sun" Machines.

Harrison Knitting Machine Co., Ltd. Works: 48, Upper Brook St., Manchester.

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Jan. 2, £8 per cent., Feb. 1, £6, Mar. 1, £5, April 1, £8, May 1, £7, June 2, £10, July 1, £9, Aug. 1, £9, Sept. 2, £8, Oct. 1, £8, Nov. 1, £7, Dec. 2, £7.

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AJAX CYCLES FOR LADIES & GENTLEMEN

ARE RICH VALUE. 25 to 30 per cent. saved and carriage paid.

IMMENSE STOCK, NEW AND SECOND HAND.

Easy Terms from 10s. per Month. Lists free.

Now Open.—LARGE CYCLING SCHOOLS at LONDON and LIVERPOOL.

Addresses—

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42, High Street, Camden Town, London, N.W., and 45, Everton Road, Liverpool.

TO TOBACCONISTS COMMENCING.

£20

See Illus. Guide and Catalogue (250 pages), 3d. "How to Open a Cigar Stores, from £20 to £3,000." TOBACCONISTS' OUTFITTING CO., 186, Euston Road, London. (Over 50 years' reputation.) Manager, H. MYERS.

HAIR DESTROYED

permanently and absolutely by an entirely new and harmless self-treatment, total destruction guaranteed. Particulars free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. Prof. F. T. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

RED NOSES

Permanently cured in a few days by a simple, inexpensive self-treatment. Particulars free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope to Dr. A. M. CURTIS, York Chambers, Adelphi, London, W.C.

HAIR DESTROYED.

A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs. "T. D.," 87, Strand, London.

MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS

For the Immediate Production of

BOTANIC BEER.

A Nine-gallon Cask of Alcoholic Beer from a Brewery will cost you 10/6, but Eight Gallons of Beer made from

Mason's EXTRACT of HERBS

Can be obtained for 6d., plus a pound or two of Sugar and a little Yeast.

THE FINEST BEVERAGE IN THE WORLD.

Inventors and Manufacturers:

Newball & Mason,

HYSON GREEN WORKS,

Nottingham.

If unable to obtain it in your neighbourhood, send 9 stamps for sample bottle; or samples of both Wine Essence and Extract of Herbs, post free for 15 stamps.

ARMSTRONG'S

Lady's & Gentleman's, from £5 10s., carriage paid. Prompt delivery, lists free. SPORTING GUN DEPT., **Collingwood Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.**

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY

BUNTER'S Prevents Decay. Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented.

Neuralgic Headache and all Nerve Pains Removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d. **NERVINE**

A LOVELY FIGURE

with **full natural perfect Bust,** obtained by a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment, approved and recommended by the medical profession. Success guaranteed. For particulars free, send stamped envelope in confidence to Madame "B. J." Oriental Toilet Co., 87 Strand, London.

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LOOK OUT FOR AN ENTIRELY NEW FORM OF COMPETITION NEXT WEEK.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 391. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 27TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

1896 PROCLAMATION.

Grand Pioneer Reduction Sale

By Messrs. F. HODGSON & SON, The Well-known Carpet Manufacturers of the City of Leeds, will take effect on sight of this advertisement.

OUR NEW VENTURE! Yes, Two Different Pattern Hearthrugs or Carpets for the Price of One! (Copyright).

Whereas, in launching forth our New Production, THE "PRUDENTIAL" CARPETS AND HEARTHRUGS, we beg to state they will have a Rich Turkish and Persian Design on one side, and on the reverse the elegant and costly designs of Wilton make. The advantage thus gained is great, as they can be utilised in various rooms at one cost. This is a valuable step in economy.

PRODIGIOUS SALE OF THE

"PRUDENTIAL" Reversible CARPETS

(Registered.)

Reversible, with a different pattern on both sides, woven throughout with handsome border to correspond; richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. Made in 10 sizes only. These carpets are the production of much care, labour, and forethought, and are made in handsome and elaborate patterns (which are protected by registration). They combine the rich blended colours of the Turkish and Persian with the elegant designs of the Wilton. These goods cannot be distinguished from real Brussels when laid down, and cannot be excelled in durability.

	Each.		Each.
6ft. by 9ft., Reduced Sale Price	4/9	9ft. by 15ft., Reduced Sale Price	12/6
7½ft. by 9ft. " " "	5/11.	12ft. by 12ft. " " "	12/9
9ft. by 9ft. " " "	7/6	12ft. by 13½ft. " " "	14/6
9ft. by 10½ft. " " "	8/6	12ft. by 15ft. " " "	15/9
8ft. by 12ft. " " "	9/6	12ft. by 18ft. " " "	19/6
10½ft. by 12ft. " " "	11/6	12ft. by 21ft. " " "	22/6

When ordering please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

"Neal Lodge, Upper Norwood, S.E., January 18th., 1896.
The Dowr. Lady Abercromby is pleased with the 'Prudential' Carpet she ordered."

"Blairquhan, Maybole, N.B., August 3rd.
Lady Hunter Blair writes: "Will Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son send her another 'Prudential' Carpet, same as before, crimson and gold, dimensions, 9ft. by 10½ft. Cheque inclosed."

A Reversible "Prudential" Hearthrug (Reg)., to match above Carpets, sent for 1s. 6d. extra, size 2 yards long, and 1 yard wide.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 Hearthrugs for 4s. 3d.; or 6 for 8s.; or 12 for 15s. 6d.

EXTRAORDINARY REDUCTIONS.

100,000 "ALARM" CARPETS

(Registered). **GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.**

Sale Price **2/11** EACH.

This Gigantic Offer is a Special Contract, made with readers of *Short Stories* only. We will forward direct from the looms to any address on receipt of amount, A GENUINE WOVEN, SEAMLESS, REVERSIBLE CARPET, the largest ever sold at the Price.

Suitable for Sitting-room or Bedroom, Bordered and Woven in Art Colours, large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any Middle Profits. Remember these are Woven, not printed, and are made of a material almost equal to Wool. Thousands of these Carpets and Rugs have already been sold at almost double above prices. A Rug sent with Carpet, 10d. extra.

SPECIAL OFFER. 2 Carpets and 2 Rugs ... ... 7s. 3d.

Value unequalled in the Annals of Advertising. As a favour, kindly Examine and Compare these Carpets.

"SHORT STORIES" CARPET COUPON, 27/6/96.

On receipt of this Coupon and P.O.O. or Stamps for amount, we guarantee to send goods as above to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. Cash returned in full if not satisfied.

(Signed) F. HODGSON & SON.

All orders dispatched same day in rotation as they arrive by post. Cheques and P.O.'s payable to

F. HODGSON AND SON, Manufacturers, Importers, and Merchants,

WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.

Telegraphic Address—"Eclipse, Leeds." Telephone No. 948.

MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS

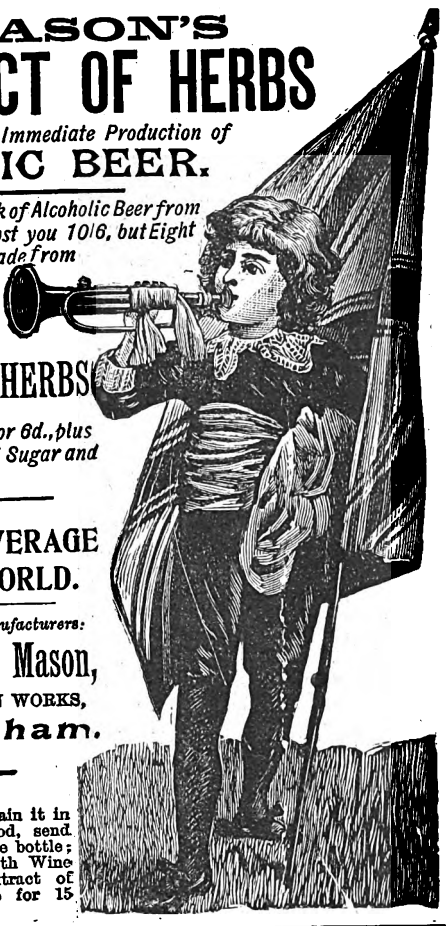
For the Immediate Production of

BOTANIC BEER.

A Nine-gallon Cask of Alcoholic Beer from a Brewery will cost you 10/6, but Eight Gallons of Beer made from

Mason's EXTRACT of HERBS

Can be obtained for 6d., plus a pound or two of Sugar and a little Yeast.



THE FINEST BEVERAGE IN THE WORLD.

Inventors and Manufacturers:

Newball & Mason,

HYSON GREEN WORKS,

Nottingham.

If unable to obtain it in your neighbourhood, send 9 stamps for sample bottle; or samples of both Wine Essence and Extract of Herbs, post free for 15 stamps.

PALATABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR COD LIVER OIL.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM.

(REALLY GENUINE.)

In Patent Air-tight Tins, ½lb., 1s. 2d.; 1lb., 2s.; 2lb., 3s. 6d., including Tin and Postage.

MRS. CONYERS, KILKHAMPTON, STRATTON, N. DEVON.

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"THE NIMBLE 9D."

Great Reduction in price to 9d. per lb. in order to reduce stock, but

QUALITY GOOD AS EVER.

NEARLY 100,000 BEDS ALREADY SOLD

TO THOROUGHLY SATISFIED PURCHASERS.

NEWHAM'S LINCOLNSHIRE FEATHER BEDS

THESE BEDS are warranted doubly purified, dusted, and perfected in our own extensive factory at Boston, Lincs., made in strong linen bordered tick. The quality, sweetness, and purity of every bed guaranteed. These beds ALWAYS GIVE SATISFACTION, and many thousands of purchasers have sent us flattering testimonials and other orders for beds. Note following prices, *which are 25 per cent. less than our recently advertised prices.*

No. 1—Single Bed, Bolster and Pillow, 6ft. 3in. by 3ft. 6in., weighing 40lb.	**30/-**
No. 2—Double Bed, Bolster, and Two Pillows, 6ft. 6in. by 4ft. 6in., weighing 50lb.	**37/6**
No. 3—Double Bed, Bolster, and Two Pillows, 6ft. 6in. by 4ft. 6in., weighing 55lb.	**41/3**
No. 4—Extra Size Bed, Bolster, and Two Pillows, 6ft. 6in. by 5ft., weighing 65lb.	**48/9**

Any sized Bed only 9d. per lb., *Carriage Paid,* to any station in the United Kingdom. FEATHERS ONLY **9d.** PER LB. The trade supplied. All orders must be accompanied by cheque or P.O.O. (which, as security to purchasers, may be post-dated ten days). Send for samples of Feathers and Ticks, Price Lists, etc., which will be sent *Post Free* and need not be returned. A great reduction on three or more Beds. *Please mention this paper.*

S. S. NEWHAM & CO., Boston, Lincolnshire.

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

Sick Headache, Constipation, Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.

ANNUAL SALE SIX MILLION BOXES.

In Boxes, 9½d., 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

HIGH-CLASS CYCLES.

Ladies' and Gents'. Low Prices. Best Materials. Finest Workmanship. Satisfaction Assured. Sent on Approval. Write for Lists.

J. LOFTUS, 58, Great George St., Liverpool.

TRILENE REGd. TABLETS THE ONLY CURE for STOUTNESS Registered by GOVERNMENT Price 2/6

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Readily **Reduce Weight** and **Cure Corpulency Permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to **PRESERVE** both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of diet. **Reduction begins immediately.**

An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

131, Victoria Street, London, S.W.—Mrs. ARTHUR WEGUELIN (the "Society" Celebrity) writes: "By simply taking the Trilene regularly, and without change of diet, I have lost 1st. 4lb. in 4 weeks."

Bretton West, near Wakefield.—"Miss L. LANGFIELD has taken a box of tablets, and is already 7lb. lighter."

Windsor Hotel, Merthyr Vale, South Wales.—Mr. J. THOMAS writes: "When I started the Tablets I weighed 17st., and have got down to 14st. 9lb."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.—Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

127, Out Gang Lane, Old Radford, Notts.—Miss E. P. PARSONS says: "I was 16½st. before taking Tablets, and am now 15st.—going on nicely."

Send 2/6 to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**

ONE BOX
OF
Dr. Mackenzie's Improved
Harmless Arsenic Complexion Wafers

will produce the most lovely complexion that the imagination could desire; clear, fresh, free from blotch, blemish, coarseness, redness, freckles, or pimples. Post free for 4/6.—**S. HARVEY,** 5 Denman St., London Bridge, S.E. Half-boxes 2/6. Use **Dr. MACKENZIE'S ARSENICAL TOILET SOAP.** 1s. per Tablet; No. 2, unscented, 6d. per Tablet. **Made from Purest Ingredients and Absolutely Harmless.**

Beware of the many imitations.

HAVE DR. MACKENZIE'S OR NONE.

STOP

PAYING RENT, and go to the United States, where you can own a Five-acre Freehold Farm for occupation or investment, only **£20.** Beautifully situated, convenient to Philadelphia, close to railway station. To be sold on instalments of 4s. per week. New Settlement, Increasing Population, Capital Investment. Title insured. Send at once for full information to **D. L. RISLEY, 63, Chancery Lane, London.** Offices also in Philadelphia and New York.

HEADACHES, NEURALGIA, RHEUMATISM | CURED SPEEDILY with **EVENIA CACHETS** (Regd.). A Safe and Certain Remedy. Send 1/3 to-day for a box, post free. D. D. BUCHAN, Friockheim, N.B.

London Agents: **F. NEWBURY & SONS, 1, King Edward Street, E.C.**

HIGH-CLASS TAILORING

Every garment cut to measure, DIRECT from the Manufacturer, saving all Middle Profits.

MEN'S SUITS, 18/6

Better Qualities, 22/6, 25/6, 31/6, 37/6, 45/-, 52/6, 63/-.

CYCLING SUITS
From 15/-.
Value Unequalled.
Fit Guaranteed.

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Pieces for Mending sent with all Suits.

LADIES' TAILOR-MADE COSTUMES
From 10/6 to 70/-
See our New Patterns before ordering.
It will pay you to do so.
(Hundreds to choose from), Post Free on Application.
All Goods Carriage Paid.

Factory Clothing Company,
Manufacturing and Ladies' Tailors,
117K, ALBION ST., LEEDS.

S.S. S.S.
PEARSON'S
£100
COUPON.
No. 26
June 27, 1896.
S.S. S.S.

HAIR DESTROYED.

A doctor's widow knows of a simple, inexpensive remedy that permanently destroys the roots, and will forward particulars free to all those afflicted sending stamped envelope. Address Mrs. B. D. WOOD, 4, DUKE STREET, VILLIERS STREET, LONDON, W.

BLUSHING

Permanently cured. A Pamphlet giving sound practical advice and particulars of a successful treatment for a rapid, simple, and inexpensive home cure, forwarded free to all upon receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—Prof. B. L. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

SULPHOLINE LOTION.

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

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No. 391.—One Penny. June 27, 1896.

SHORT STORIES

A STORY OF THE GOLDEN HORN.

Winter in Constantinople wears, for the most part, anything but a smiling face. It has nothing of the splendour of a northern climate, and lacks altogether the exalted stillness of snow-covered fields, creamy hills, and deeply-buried forests. It has the character of an abortive spring that can scarcely resist the temptation to relapse into wet winter. But there are occasional intervals, during which a mild blue firmament covers the residence of the sultans, the minarets and mosque-domes glitter and sparkle, and the waters of the Golden Horn ripple lovingly at the feet of evergreen hills, reflecting with dazzling effect the lovely blue overhead.

It was such a day, in the middle of December, 1879, while lounging in the reading-room of the German Club at Pera, that I met a former acquaintance, a young physician of whom I had for some time lost sight, though I knew that he had not left Constantinople.

Dr. Otto Franzeen was an interesting man. Tall and slender of stature, his rosy face was remarkable for a pair of large, calm brown eyes that contrasted surprisingly with his light blonde hair and golden blonde beard. But what characterised the man was the mystic calm of his manner and the paucity of his words. He spoke but little, went about alone, and his social relations with the foreign residents of the capital of the Ottoman Empire were as limited as courtesy would permit.

I saw him first in the reading-room in Pera, which he frequented, and we entered into conversation. The talk rambled through a variety of topics, but presently it became more personal.

"It is singular," he continued, after we had exchanged a few confidences, "that people here look on a man as though he were a child. They would guide each of my steps, and would absolutely lead me in the path to fortune and happiness. I am under surveillance by day and by night, and I believe the colony enters all my movements in a ledger. In this respect the Turks are different," he continued, after a few seconds; "they call for my services; but as soon as I am out of their houses I am dead as far as they are concerned."

"Then you also have practice among the Mohammedans?" I asked, somewhat surprised, knowing that foreign doctors are only called to attend Turkish families in very exceptional cases, and then generally only very old men, and such as have lived in Constantinople many years and are married.

"Yes," he replied, "I have more calls to Turks than to others. My practice is extending with the former."

"No doubt a paying practice?" I ventured.

"Very, but difficult," he replied, in his uncommunicative manner; "the women I am expected to treat when covered by the veil, and that is impossible. I declare my inability to help them under such circumstances, and that is generally effective. With groans and sighs the veil is removed, and what it had hidden would, in most cases, better have remained covered."

"In most cases, but not in all?" I interrupted.

"No, not in all," he said pensively; "for the greatest beauty here I saw unveiled. She was a slave," he added, and into his eyes there came a peculiar light.

He fixed his eyes thoughtfully on the ground, and his slender, nervous hand played excitedly with a paper-cutter. The expression of his face had suddenly become so singular that I felt a great desire to hear more of that slave girl. But from this time he relapsed into his wonted thoughtful silence.

After that meeting, weeks passed without my seeing the singular man again. Then we met again on several occasions, but I took care not to put any questions to him, or to exhibit a desire to learn anything he did not volunteer to impart, and by degrees we became excellent acquaintances.

One day Dr. Franzeen asked me whether I knew where he could obtain a Spinoza translated into German. I happened to have the volume he needed, and gave him the book. After a few days he confided to me that the book was destined to be read by a lady, a highly cultivated widow who now desired to form my acquaintance, and had commissioned him to present me to her.

In a house fitted up in the Pompeiian style, with the finest taste, though plainly, and with a certain colourless severity, I found a magnificently formed woman, with an intellectual face and great black eyes, clear, dark, fiery, and deep, that possessed rare powers of fascination. I envied my friend, and feared for him at the same time, for this was a woman who might bring the most exquisite joy or the most exquisite pain to the man who falls within her magic sphere.

She greeted me simply and cordially. We talked on a wide variety of topics, and I admired the profound knowledge and the conversational powers she displayed.

"I hate blue-stockings," she remarked, "who only study in order to boast of their knowledge. As for me, I want to be able to analyse the phenomena of life, and to this end I need science and art. My past life, which was a glittering desert, and my present status, confirmed me in this predilection—I might say they compel it. What else shall I do? How utilise my leisure? I have nothing to care for, and live isolated from all mankind mostly by my own choice. Were I a woman who was loved, and returned that love, then probably I should

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live only for my husband as wife and housekeeper, which I regard as the highest and noblest destiny of woman." And with these words she gave my friend a quick glance, full of fire.

My visit came to an end all too soon. I parted from this extraordinary woman with feelings of admiration, and the relations of my friend to her began to burden my heart. She loved him—but he? Silently he took his leave of her that evening, apparently lost in deep and heavy thought. We took the road leading to the city, and wandered along the gently murmuring ripples of the Bosphorus, which, languidly illumined by the glittering stars overhead, sought sportively to leap up on the quay.

After that evening he disappeared, as was occasionally his custom. The lady, it is true, answered my inquiries after our mutual friend with a calm voice and careless manner, but her face was more pale than usual; her eyes were surrounded by dark rings, and her features bore the expression of suffering. For over a month I could not get sight of my friend. He developed a really wonderful talent to avoid meeting me, for he still went his professional rounds with regularity; but, despite all my pains and artifices, I failed to meet him either in the street or in places he was wont to frequent.

Nevertheless, the air was full of rumours about him, one of which was to the effect that he was a frequent visitor at the house of a pasha's widow, and that he was infatuated with one of her slaves. Although the institution of slavery, and, above all, the slave trade, is officially abolished in Constantinople, in reality slavery exists to-day just as it did a hundred years since; but it must not show itself in public. For this there is good reason, since the Turkish household could not exist without female slaves.

No Turkish woman, no Turkish girl, who would pass for respectable, may appear unveiled before a man; even the lord of the household must, when he enters his house, give the warning cry "desdur!" (take care), that all women present, not his wives or daughters, may take refuge behind the veil and leave the house. Beings thus encumbered cannot, however, perform the household work; hence the slave is a necessity, for she is a non-Mohammedan—a mere thing—and may appear before any man without the veil. Should she rise to the dignity of a wife, she is at once invested with the veil, and she is thenceforward governed by the same moral and social code as the others.

The education of those slaves who are only luxuries constitutes a profession that is exercised chiefly by widows, but often also by the wives of high officials. The children are purchased from people of Caucassian blood; high prices are paid for a five-year-old handsome and intelligent girl.

She receives a careful education and instruction in the languages, music and dancing as well as in some of the arts, if she displays any talent in that direction.

Arrived at a proper age, the girl is sold into a rich and aristocratic family, in which the virtuous, highly educated, physically and intellectually-developed girl occupies a most anomalous position. She waits upon visitors, entertains them, and is an article of luxury—just as are in our elegant drawing-rooms the paintings of celebrated masters. Such a slave cannot be bought for less than £1,700. Not infrequently these young women marry men of high station, and some have even become the mothers of sultans.

Such a speculative educational institution was possessed by the widow of Essouf Pasha, and Dr. Franzeen had been selected by her as physician to the house. This was unusual, but of five of her pupils who had lain prostrate with typhus fever he had saved all. From that time the Turkish lady placed visits in a house which otherwise was open only to the richest Mohammedan buyers.

The rumours led me to think. Why did he hide himself from me? Why avoid the handsome widow, who, he must have known, loved him? There might be some truth in the rumour, although in one respect it must needs be false—one cannot court a slave.

It is an impossibility for such a girl to follow the bent of her inclinations, for she is the property of her educator, and should she attempt flight, the authorities would come to the aid of her owner, would find, and return her to slavery, and should her lover be a foreigner, whose legal punishment might cause diplomatic trouble, he would surely and silently disappear, never to be seen again.

Hence, there could be no thought of courtship in this case. But one way of getting possession of such a girl was open to a foreigner—to buy her, and as he is not permitted to keep a slave, to marry her.

I knew my friend to be without means, nor had he been able to accumulate much money during his one year's sojourn in Pera. How then could he indulge such idle fancies? It is true Dr. Franzeen was a peculiar man, that I knew right well; but foolish he was not. In all his undertakings he had a clear, attainable end in view; and yet I was much disturbed by his conduct for the past few weeks.

One day—I was reading my home-paper in the German club-room—a hand was laid upon my shoulder, and looking up I was surprised to see the lost one standing by my side. He looked thin and worn, and his attitude was less elastic than formerly.

"Shall we take a walk?" he asked, in a rather tremulous voice. I declared my willingness, and we took the road to the old bridge. For some time he walked silently by my side, and I followed his example, when presently he exclaimed excitedly:

"You are well-known in financial circles here, do you know anyone who would lend me fifteen thousand francs for a year? I would like to borrow that sum, and pay the usual interest."

"Then, after all, the rumour is correct?" I could not help saying.

"What rumour?" he asked excitedly.

"That you are in love with a slave-girl."

"And if it were so?"

"I thought you had other aims and ambitions."

"I had deceived myself," he replied, without looking up; "I was blinded by the soul, the originality, the depth, and the importance of the lady—I was fascinated by her individuality. But now a great passion has taken possession of the whole man in me—it is true love itself. I am infatuated with a charming being full of youth and fragrance; a being like a May flower; the personification of youth; spring with all its spiritual and material charms. She is a slave-girl, it is true, a pupil of the widow of Essouf Pasha, but I am determined to buy this girl, and make her my wife."

"Are you certain your love is returned?" I asked.

"I fancy I can read love in her eyes—to speak of love I have as yet been unable, under the peculiar conditions that obtain in Turkish households. She casts down her eyes when I accost her, while the others look at me calmly; she blushes when I approach, and her breathing is hurried; she trembles when I take her hand to feel her

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pulse, and she is always the first I see when I enter the house. If I discontinue my visits for a little while, she perceptibly revives on my return—that I have noticed."

"Have you, then, had an understanding with Mrs. Carlson?," I felt myself called upon to ask.

"That is impossible," he exclaimed excitedly. "What shall I tell her? What can I tell her? We are as good as betrothed. She is an extraordinary woman; remarkably handsome, rich, highly cultivated—but a certain something she lacked always. She never bewitched me; never drew me into such a delicious whirlpool of all my senses as does this quiet, youthful creature whom I have before my mind's eye wherever I am; who has taken possession of my entire being. With that lady I still possessed the power of thinking; here I am entirely without will."

"But, as a man of honour, you owe that lady an explanation," I ventured to remind him. "Go bravely to Mrs. Carlson and tell her all."

"I cannot do it," he groaned.

"Then write to her, at least."

"That would be cowardly; I could not bring myself to do it."

"Then you will come to grief, and you may besides bring ruin to two good, noble beings," said I, and parted in very bad humour from a man who could allow passion thus to unman him.

A few days after this meeting I received a letter from Mrs. Carlson which ran as follows:

"I am in need of a friendly service, and have no one to whom I can apply to help me. Your manner, your face, inspire me with the courage to address you. Will you have the goodness to call on me at an early date? I rely on your knightliness.—Flora Carlson."

I hesitated not a moment to place myself at the disposition of the lady, took a carriage, and drove to her villa.

I found the beautiful widow looking yet more pale, and her eyes had a fixed, far-off expression, as though she had no concern with her immediate surroundings, but with something far, far away.

"Do not be surprised," said the lady, after she had thanked me for my readiness to serve her, and my quick response to her call, "if I demand something unusual of you. Were it an ordinary matter I had not troubled you. You are the only friend of Doctor Franzeen, perhaps his confidant—then you know more than I can tell you. In that case you are also a dear confidant to me. I take that for granted, and in this capacity I invoke your good offices. Please"—and she made an heroic effort to maintain her composure, but her voice became almost inaudible—"go to the widow of Essouf Pasha, and tell her you come as the messenger of Affarid Pasha—here is his card—and you wish to see Tenzilé. You are a judge of men and women, I know. Observe the girl carefully, and report to me what you think of her appearance and how she impressed you. I need not tell you more," she concluded, giving utterance to the words with apparent effort. "I only wish to know how the girl looks, and have not the courage or the strength to confront her."

This commission took me aghast. It seemed that she knew all. What was her object in sending me on this mission? Did she wish to become acquainted with her rival? How would that serve her? Did she desire to institute comparisons between that person and herself, and did she wish to be convinced of the possession of such superior charms on the side of the slave-girl, that the hope of successful rivalry would be vain; or did she hope that if the opposite were the case, the man, charmed only by external appearances, would see his error, and return to her? But the lady's character forbade her entertaining such thoughts, or meditating such deeds. What, then, was her motive for this curious mission? Her feelings were too deeply involved for the gratification of ordinary curiosity—that was proved by the emotion and excitement she displayed when acquainting me with her wishes; still, she was a woman, and possibly these motives, connected, would guide her actions.

These thoughts ran through my brain while she was speaking to me.

"I shall endeavour to carry out your wishes," I replied, "though their fulfilment is not without difficulty, for one cannot well so describe a person that a third party shall see that person as she really is."

"You are a man and an artist," she replied, "and I shall hear the truth from you. With a woman, if she were the nicest judge of human nature in the world, and an artist besides, I should have my doubts. Beings of our sex judge only men rightly—at least as far as they affect—" She seemed to want to say something more, but broke off. "I can depend on you," she concluded abruptly.

Full of conflicting emotions, I returned to the city—to the Mohammedan quarters.

The house of the pasha's widow I found east of the Atmeidan, in one of the small side streets that branch out from that place; it differed in no respect from the rest of the Turkish houses—the same irregularly situated windows, with wooden bars, and the same red-painted oaken doors, studded with great nails, with a massive knocker. I set the latter in motion, and the portal opened after some delay. I stepped into a small vestibule, which was partitioned in the middle by a wooden grating extending from floor to ceiling. Behind this wooden grating stood a black female servant, who demanded my business.

I explained to her my mission, and the negress disappeared. Presently she returned with a second, then came a third, and finally an elderly French woman, evidently a governess. Then ensued a long parley. The four ambassadresses came and went. At last a lady in European costume, with yellow, Turkish face, and sharp black eyes, appeared behind the grating, subjected me to a searching scrutiny from between the bars, heard my mention of the pasha's name, which was on the card I carried, looked at the Turkish words written on the card, and retired, after saying a few (to me) unintelligible words to one of the black servants.

The wooden grating opened, and, beckoning me to follow, the old negress ascended a narrow, dark, stone stairway. I groped my way up the steps, and again found myself before a wooden grating. This was opened by the negress with a key that hung from a steel chain around her neck, and, crossing a grotesquely-decorated dark hall, following on the heels of my black guard, I reached a large room, also dark. The negress went to a window, lifted a heavy curtain to admit light, and invited me by a gesture to wait there.

I now had leisure to look round in the large space. It was impressive in its baldness. The walls were painted in a bluish oil-colour, upon which were sketched, at regular distances, gaudy birds of Paradise, rocking themselves on chains of roses. On the walls hung a few oil-paintings, portraits of the Sultan, and of the German and Austrian Emperors; three quite modern Parisian sofas, a grand piano, and an enormous, gaily-

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coloured paper lantern, suspended from the ceiling, completed the furniture of the room.

The Turkish lady presently returned, accompanied by the Frenchwoman, and introduced herself as the mistress of the house. She spoke very faulty French, and the governess was probably to act as interpreter. I signified to the widow that I could speak Turkish quite passably. She smiled pleasantly, scrutinised me still more critically out of her coal-black eyes, and pointed to a sofa opposite her.

"You wish to see Tenzilé?" began the widow, when we were seated.

"On commission," I hastened to say.

"Affarid Pasha wishes you to paint her portrait for a European lady, who is much interested in the excellent girl."

I was somewhat taken aback over my unexpected investment with the painter's skill—I am a sculptor—but quickly adapted myself to the situation, and said: "I believe such is the fact."

"Well," resumed the Turkish widow, "Affarid Pasha has opened negotiations with me for Tenzilé, whom he has known since her childhood. He is, as you are aware, thrifty; the sum for reimbursement of the outlays for her education seems to him too large, and he cannot make up his mind. It is quite contrary to our customs to paint the portrait of a young lady, unless it be destined for our most exalted lord, the sultan. However, I will make a special exception in favour of Affarid Pasha and his lady client. You shall be allowed to paint Tenzilé's portrait, but I cannot permit you to set foot in our house, be it for ever so brief a period, more than twice."

She made a sign to the French woman, who left the room and returned with a girl in Turkish dress.

"This is Tenzilé," said the widow.

The girl was loveliness itself—the incorporation of youth and beauty. There was in her personality something that moved the heart, yet ravished the senses; a slender, neat, yet full figure—such a figure as only an ancient Greek sculptor would succeed in copying and displaying as the apotheosis of the loveliest budding womanhood. The curly, undulating, golden-blonde hair; great, dreamy, black eyes; the finely-curved, gently-sloping nose; the oval face, with the faintest suspicion of yellow, with the full, sweet mouth, together completes the singular witchery of her appearance.

I now realised how my friend could have become intoxicated by the beauty of this child of a southern sun.

"The gentleman is to paint you, little daughter," explained the widow.

Tenzilé made a graceful courtesy, and a lovely blush spread over her cheek.

"I am not very pretty," she began in good French. "I have a yellow face; my friends, Serbe and Darie, are much prettier."

Her voice was wonderfully elastic and sweet.

"The gentleman has a commission to paint you for a Frankish lady, Tenzilé," the widow said; "he will only come twice, and you must, therefore, sit quite still," she added.

Tenzilé bent her head in assent.

"It will not trouble you long," I said, addressing myself to the beautiful slave; "I shall only make a flying sketch to-day, however," I continued, turning to the widow again, "it is necessary that I should converse with the young lady, for thus the soul, which must speak out of the face, reveals itself to us, and I beg your consent to that end."

The Pasha's widow consented.

Taking out my note-book, which for the nonce served as sketch-book, I sketched the outlines of the girl's face, meanwhile conversing with her on various topics. She showed a sharp intelligence and not uncommon knowledge, after the fashion of young, refined Frenchwomen, brought up in convents, and a childlike, affectionate heart. She observed me thoughtfully and with curiosity. Her puzzled, earnest, innocent expression filled me with sadness—almost with pain.

I could not bear to prolong the sitting. With deepest sympathy I took my leave of this girl, created to obey, unquestioning, the will of others.

I showed Mrs. Carlson—who, to judge from her expression, had waited for me impatiently—the sketch, and reported what I had seen, learned, felt, and thought, as calmly, dispassionately, and objectively as possible. She remained speechless while I spoke, then suddenly caught my hand, bent over it, and kissed it before I could draw it away—hot tears were on it when I did—then burying her face in her handkerchief she hurried from the room.

Sad at heart, I left the villa and walked home, wondering what was to come out of all this chaos.

I turned my steps towards the house of my friend. He was out; he had left his lodgings a few minutes before. But I found there a note addressed to me that was just to have been sent to me—its contents suited my plans and purposes.

"Dear friend," wrote Dr. Franzeen, "I feel very lonely. Will you come to-morrow? I hope you also have no engagement for the day. Shall we two forsaken ones spend the evening together in my quarters? I shall expect you if you do not at once decline the invitation."

The next day proved to be charming; it is true the heavens were overcast, but through the enveloping fog there shone a gentle sunlight that invested everything with a dreary aspect, the cupola-crowned houses of the great city, as well as the faded green hills and the gently murmuring waters.

I found my friend sitting at the piano, and was just in time to hear the last tones of a Beethoven sonata—he was a brilliant performer. Hearing me, he sprang up and greeted me, entirely unlike himself, with excitement and passionate warmth.

"If I had not that," and he pointed to his music, "I should have lost my reason ere this."

"Because you are parted from Flora?" I asked.

"Because I feel that I am acting irresponsibly towards that lady, and am facing an Oriental happiness—perhaps," he replied, half-musingly, half-inquiringly.

"It is not too late to call a halt and atone for your fault."

"I cannot tear myself away from the dream," he said, with a heavy breath; "it is only a dream that I realise, for I shall be unable to raise the sum demanded in the short time left me, and I have found out from the pasha's widow herself, that various grandees of the city, among them Affarid Pasha, are suitors for the girl. She will be taken from me, my hopes and wishes are as naught, and yet I cannot give her up. But do you imagine," he continued painfully, "that the lady would hail me as a prodigal son? Then you have but a poor insight into her character; it is pure, refined, and beaming like a diamond, but, in ethical matter, hard as that stone."

"The lady loves you," I asserted, "with the whole power of her noble, passionate soul."

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"The less likely that she will lower herself by descending to my level."

"Do you believe you will be happy with the slave?" I now asked involuntarily, in an earnest, weighty tone.

"If for ever—that I do not know. But it would be an almost crushing happiness for years, and such years count a hundredfold," he replied passionately. "And you cannot count the greatest happiness by years; they are really only moments—continuous happiness would kill. But I shall never be able to call this girl my own—and I have lost a noble heart."

It had become dark while we talked, though we had not noticed it. It had seemed to me that I heard wheels halt before the house, and steps in the ante-room. Then all was still again. My friend was just going to his writing-table to fetch a light, when the door flew open, and a flood of light streamed into the room. Was it a fairy scene that met my eyes? Did our excited phantasies deceive us? Or were we dreaming with eyes wide open? In the open doorway, carrying a letter in her hand, stood Tenzilé.

I sprang to my feet, and Doctor Franzeen stood as though transfixed, with staring eyes, pale and trembling, with his hands raised as though to ward off an apparition.

At this moment an elderly woman, whom I recognised as the housekeeper of Mrs. Carlson, stepped from behind the girl, took from her the letter, and with the words: "From my mistress, for the Herr doctor," laid it in Franzeen's hand.

He looked at the letter, and opened it as if in a dream. For a long time he read, nor seemed to know what he was reading. Again and again he read. His pale face took on some colour, the light returned to his eyes, and sinking into a chair, he wept aloud.

The beautiful girl looked with affright at this singular man, and trembled perceptibly.

I did not deem it an indiscretion to pick up and read the letter. It was from Mrs. Carlson.

"Dearly Beloved Friend" (it ran),—"I have learned that you turned for happiness elsewhere than to me.

"My life-aim is your happiness, hence I have bought the girl that is to bring you this message to day in order that you may be reminded that I have loved you truly, deeply, and sincerely, and that I have placed your happiness above my own. My only wish is that you may make the lovely being happy, and that you may be made happy in your choice. Tenzilé will return with my servant to her former mistress, and will remain with her as your betrothed until the necessary formalities for the wedding have been arranged.—FLORA CARLSON."

While I was reading the letter, Dr. Franzeen had risen, and now stood calmly before the beautiful slave.

"You know what is contained in this letter?" he quietly asked.

"Yes," answered the girl; but with blushes suffusing her cheeks.

"You are satisfied with the destination the European lady has in view for you?"

"My duty is to obey," Tenzilé answered tremblingly.

"Do you follow duty's call in this case with love—with your heart?" Dr. Franzeen questioned further.

Tenzilé raised her eyes to his for a moment, fully and calmly, and said:

"Why should I not? I shall be to you a faithful servant."

"Not servant—my wife you are to be. Know you that?"

"It has been told me," came from her full, fine lips.

"And does not your heart leap with joy at the thought?" questioned Dr. Franzeen; "do you not feel a nameless happiness because of this?"

"I am rejoiced," said the girl.

"And if you had to belong to another man, would that make you unhappy?" the young physician continued slowly.

"Then I would serve him, as it is my duty to do."

"Gladly?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you would not be unhappy if you could not belong to me?"

Tenzilé smiled. "I would gladly see in you my lord."

"You would not, however, feel unhappy, disconsolate, sad, if you could not belong to me?" persevered the young man.

"No," said Tenzilé, with the same smile.

The conversation had been carried on in the Turkish language. My friend now turned to me.

"The dream is over," he said. "I thought myself beloved. The girl belongs to another world than the one in which we live. She is a beautiful image, a beautiful plaything, but no wife for a Christian. Even if the letter and the mode of action of Mrs. Carlson had not already opened my eyes to a revelation, what nobility there may be in a woman, what she may be capable of, the purity of her love, the last few moments have torn from my eyes the veil that passion and intoxication of the senses wove over them. I go to throw myself at the feet of that woman, and to beg her forgiveness. This is the second time she has proved my saviour."

"Josepha," he continued, addressing the elderly companion of the girl, "do you go back to your mistress, conduct this pretty child to her, and tell her that I shall be with her in a few minutes to express my thanks."

Smiling sweetly, Tenzilé took her leave and disappeared with the housekeeper. Darkness again fell upon the room.

"You will excuse me?" asked Doctor Franzeen; "I shall attempt to obtain forgiveness," he added simply.

"I know that you will find it."

We parted with a long pressure of the hands, that said more than words could have expressed, and I returned to my lodgings.

I might have been at home an hour when I heard a carriage stop before the house, and in a few minutes Mrs. Carlson's little grey-headed English servant stood before me with an invitation to come to the villa as quickly as possible, and to make use of the carriage she had sent.

I ran down to the carriage in such haste that the old fellow could scarcely keep up with me.

Stepping into the drawing-room I found Mrs. Carlson and Dr. Franzeen standing, hand in hand, with that bliss shining from their eyes that only such moments can bring forth; bliss such as probably no human twain experience a second time in this life. On the table was the letter that Tenzilé had borne. The young girl had already returned to her former mistress.

How the reconciliation took place I never had a precise account. Dr. Franzeen merely hinted that he had said about the same thing to her that he had in the room to me—for that was all that at the moment he could think of. When he stepped into the lady's room and exclaimed: "Forgive me! forgive me! I have dreamed a hasheesh dream, but am now awake, and see but you alone in this world!" Mrs. Carlson fainted and lay senseless in his arms. At last she opened her eyes wide, looked deeply and gravely into his, lovingly put her arms about his neck and pressed her lips to his.

T. E.

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THIS is in the nature of a personal explanation. A long time ago I wrote a story which met with a certain degree of success; my friends and the reading public who greeted that so kindly have often asked why my pen has since been silent, and to them I make this confession—that the success of that story was equivocal. There was an under side to it, and an aftermath, and lines written between the lines, and parts of it were written with invisible, but indelible characters on the tablets of my heart.

Have you ever written a story? But of course you have—everyone has, nowadays; so you know, each of you, the swelling of the mind, gestant with great thoughts—how certain you were, when you began, that you had something to say, and how feeble our poor vehicle of expression seemed before the importance of it. Then, when finally written out in our common everyday phraseology, that glimmering of doubt: perhaps it was not the very first time that the same thing had been said: perhaps—but perish the thought!—it has been even better said before. Never mind. Though, poor thing, it is thine own now, and none else will ever know how you yearn over that bantling of your brain.

Thus with my story, as I thought it and planned it. Then, when circumstances compelled the changing of it all—but I anticipate.

My most intimate friend at that time was Fred Phillips, a young physician of much talent, but few patients. That is how my desk happened to be in his office, and how I chanced to allow him to work out some of the minor details of my story.

In the beginning, I had determined that my work should be of the realistic school. So, in order that all my portraiture should be true to life, after the heroine was fashioned "fair and so slenderly." Fred's professional knowledge was availed of to carry her through a long and interesting illness, and at the last to allow her to die in a rational and logical manner.

"I do not quite like the idea," he had said. "I see enough of that sort of thing"—the fact was, Fred's patients did die, mostly—"and I would much rather show how our art can be employed in assisting Nature at the last ditch."

"No, that won't do; this is to be a model of realism, and I don't want any fiction in it, except so much as is necessary to carry the idea," I replied.

"All right," replied Fred; "I will do the best I can for you. I won't draw a case from real life—from my own practice—for that would be unprofessional, but I will diagnose a case as it might be, and kill the patient off in a manner with which no one can find fault." I did not like his flippancy of tone very well, but I knew Fred could be of real use to me if he would, so I overlooked it.

My story was published in the *Family Omnibus*, as a serial. The publication had finally reached that point, where, after sundry convalescences and relapses, it could be clearly seen that the heroine was on the final down-grade.

On the evening of the day upon which the instalment appeared that settled this, Fred came into the office in a state of great excitement. Thinking it possible that he had been called to attend a patient, I congratulated him upon his change of luck, and quoted a certain proverb, to the effect that, "patient waiters, etc."

"Hang your proverbs!" he cried, rudely interrupting before I had finished. "This matter concerns yourself, as well as me. You must change that confounded story."

"Change our story?" I asked in astonishment.

"Our story?" he retorted. "I wash my hands of it. I shall be lucky if I can undo the harm that you have already done by it."

Harm! The story was as wholesome in tone as any combination of words that could possibly be formed. It could not harm even the most unsophisticated of novel-readers. I began to wonder if Fred's mind were not unsettled by his long waiting for the practice that never came. Yet I was too incensed to waste much sympathy on him.

"Will you be good enough to explain?" I asked icily. "That is, provided you are sane enough to know what you are talking about."

"Sane?" he answered. "I am sane enough now. I wish I had been as much so when you persuaded me to join in your confounded plot. But we must not quarrel, old fellow," he said, with some show of contrition. "I

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did not mean to use big words, but this matter is of the utmost importance; we must work together in it."

His matter impressed me with the genuineness of his own emotion, if not with the importance of his case, whatever that might prove to be; so I sat down again and made ready to listen to him.

He took a chair opposite, with his arms spread out on the table between us, as if mutely imploring my aid and forbearance. After a moment's silence, which he evidently thought to make impressive, he began:

"She is the most beautiful creature!"

"Who is the most beautiful creature?" I asked impatiently, as he came to a full stop.

"Ah! I forgot. You don't know her. Madge Wilmerdale."

Madge Wilmerdale! I fairly sprang from my chair in amazement. Clearly, the fellow was crazy. Madge Wilmerdale was the name of my heroine. It flashed upon me that the glorious creation of my imagination had in some curious manner become endowed to him with a corporeal being. How grand, yet how sad a testimony, to the skill with which I had wrought! I gazed upon my friend with eyes moist with sympathy for his misfortune, while yet my heart bounded with exaltation. Fred glanced up and divined the meaning of my look.

"Pshaw!" he exclaimed pettishly. "Don't stare at me in that way. I don't mean your pen-and-ink Madge, but the real flesh-and-blood one."

Poor boy! he really believed in her. I would humour his hallucination, and thus gain time to determine what was best to do.

"Is there a flesh-and-blood one?" I asked, feigning amazement as best I could.

"Yes; but I can't say how long there will be if this goes on."

"Can't say how long there will be?" I echced.

"Man alive," he cried excitedly, "can't you do something besides repeat my words? Yes—I don't know how long there will be, if this goes on."

"If what goes on?" I asked, with a show of submission.

"That confounded story!"

"But what can I do about it?"

"Burn the thing."

"Why?"

"Because you are killing the real Madge with your outrageous details of the approaching death of the fictitious one."

Really, I thought, his hallucination is wonderfully complete; but I answered:

"Oh! you are giving me too much credit. I may say, with becoming modesty, that I know the story is a strong one; but that it can excite such emotions as will endanger life——"

"Emotions be hanged! Miss Wilmerdale is impressed with the belief that this story is drawn from life. The diagnosis that I was fool enough to invent for you happens to be exactly the same as that made in her own case. In watching the progress of the story, she fancies that she sees her own fate foreshadowed. It is a pathological curiosity—or would be, if it were not so wretchedly sad—that her condition grows better or worse in exact correspondence with that of the fictitious Madge."

Fred said all this with such quiet seriousness that I began to doubt the correctness of my first suspicions. Could it be that he had accidentally run across such a curious parallel?

"How did you happen to become cognisant of this precious analogy?" I asked.

"I was summoned by Mrs. Wilmerdale this morning, to consult regarding her daughter's condition. She had already been to the editor of the *Omnibus*, to discover the address of the author of the story. Denman refused to give that without your authority; but, knowing our relations, he advised her to consult me. I found that the daughter is firmly convinced that, whatever the fate of your Madge shall be, hers will be the same. I have pledged myself that the closing chapters find the heroine restored to health. You must help me make that pledge good."

After all, Fred was not crazy—only Quixotic. I was glad to know that, but of course my story could not be mutilated just for a girl's whim.

"It is all nonsense," I said, "to talk about changing the entire plot, just to humour a sick girl's fancy."

"It is not a mere fancy. I have long been satisfied that the mental condition often exerts a vast influence over the physical condition of a patient. Of course, I have not told Miss Wilmerdale that the death of this fictitious Madge is already arranged; but I have said to her mother that if I found it to be so it should be changed."

"It strikes me," I answered warmly, "that you have taken an unwarranted liberty in doing so. Even though the story is having this effect upon one susceptible reader, of which I am not wholly sure, I cannot see that I am responsible."

"Then you refuse to do anything? You will risk becoming a murderer for the sake of your own petty ambition?" Fred was losing his temper again.

"I have not said that; but I want time to investigate."

"There is no time to lose. The next number of the *Omnibus* will be issued the day after to-morrow. If you do not agree to change the story, I must take the other alternative and enjoin its further publication."

Now I knew that Fred was just foolish and hot-headed enough to take such a step as that, so I began to use diplomacy.

"Well, I will see Denman to-night and consult with him about the matter. I will make no promise yet; and it seems worth while——"

* * * * *

But the matter-of-fact editor put the affair in a new light.

"Says he will serve an injunction, does he? That would be the very best thing that could happen for us. Of course the injunction would not hold; it might cause a delay of a few weeks before we could resume publication of the story. If it did, I should report the matter fully in our columns and comment on it editorially. When we resumed the thing, it would sell like wild-fire."

After a moment, he continued: "I think, Mr. Morton, we had better get the M.S. all ready to issue in book form. Write a new preface, and we will put it on the market the day we print the last instalment. Such an opportunity must not be neglected. This affair is going to be a huge advertisement for you and for the *Omnibus*."

He rubbed his hands gleefully at the thought of the shekels that would soon be flowing through them.

I left the editorial room in a most uncertain frame of mind. I could not well afford to lose this chance of literary fame and fortune. I knew only too well how difficult it was to strike the tide at its flood, and had been working a long while to get my foot firmly on even the

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The matter-of-fact editor.

lowest round of the ladder. Now that I found myself ready to climb, must I kick the ladder from under me?

Just then a brilliant thought struck me. From Denman I had learned Mrs. Wilmerdale's address. I would call upon her.

I found her, with her daughter, occupying a handsome house in the western suburbs. My card requested that I might see Mrs. Wilmerdale alone. I did not care to reveal myself to the living Madge until I had resolved upon my line of action.

A graceful, pretty little old lady came forward to welcome me, asking, with an air that betrayed little interest, to what she was indebted for the honour of my visit. But the lack of interest in voice and manner vanished completely when I made myself known.

"Ah, sir, you are so good to come!" said she. "Dr. Phillips told us that he would use his influence. I know you have come to give us some hope."

I might have yielded at once, if it had not been for that unfortunate reference to Phillips. I had not yet forgiven him for his high-handed interferences, so, manlike, I retaliated upon this woman.

"I don't know, Mrs. Wilmerdale. You have asked something that is very difficult. If none of the story had been printed, it would be very different; and, you know, I have not any evidence that the matter is so important as you seem——"

"Ah," she interrupted, "you have not seen Madge. But you will see her? Then you will know." She clasped her hands appealingly before me, as if I held the balance of life and death.

And so I saw Madge Wilmerdale.

If ever, in all this world, a young girl—but what is the use of repeating? You remember the description of the other Madge as she was upon her eighteenth birthday?

Well, here was the creature of my fancy—the real rivalling the ideal.

At that moment I felt some genuine respect for the genius that had enabled me to limn so perfect a portrait from the mere filaments of my brain. But, on the instant, I was stricken to the heart that it should have been so true; for here was not only the perfect physical beauty that I had portrayed, and the beauty of soul as well, showing through those blue soul's windows, but here, too, were that hectic flush, and the sharp, quick cough that were the precursors of the inevitable end, when this beauty must perish, and be as dust.

When we were again alone I turned to Mrs. Wilmerdale.

"Is there no hope?" I asked.

"No one can help her but you, Mr. Morton. The physician can do nothing further."

The answer brought me back to myself.

"You fully believe, then, that she follows the course of the other—the fictitious Miss Wilmerdale?"

"As surely as night follows day."

"Then I can make but one answer. All that lies in my power shall be done. But—may I ask a favour, Mrs. Wilmerdale?"

"You cannot ask any that I shall not grant joyfully, if you do this thing."

"Then may I read the conclusion of my story to your daughter in advance of its publication?"

The lady gave me a quick glance—I fancied to see if she could discover my purpose, and if she might trust me—and nodded her assent.

That night I worked hard. I cut and hewed and hacked at that story. I ransacked Fred's library to make myself more familiar with the pathology of the dread disease. In an hour my heroine was convalescing—on paper. By daybreak she was well.

I was asleep on the office lounge when Fred came in and awakened me.

"So you have changed your mind," he said sneeringly. "I was up there last night after you left. You were easily converted."

"Who would not be, at the sight of that glorious creature?" I retorted.

"You have been at work already," he said, glancing about at my disordered papers.

"Yes; I am going up this afternoon to read the M.S. to them."

"Don't you think I had better go over it first, and see that you maintain some semblance of logic? You will have the critics down on you, if you are not careful."

"That for the critics now!" I cried, snapping my fingers.

"Well, as Miss Wilmerdale's physician, I warn you to be careful. Any undue excitement, sudden or false hopes held out, might prove very disastrous."

This was a change of tune, but I said nothing. It was part of my plain to be careful. I had as good an excuse now as had Fred for being admitted to the society of the Wilmerdales, and I did not propose to throw away my season-ticket for a single entertainment.

That afternoon I took with me a single chapter of the revised M.S.

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Madge was half reclining upon an easy lounge as I entered.

"Your mother tells me," I began, "that you are good enough to be interested in the story that I am publishing in the *Omnibus*, and I have thought it might amuse you to hear a portion of it in advance of publication; especially as my heroine has borrowed your name."

"You are the author, then, of the tale?" she asked sadly. "I would indeed be glad to hear the rest of the story, if I may. Because," she added, in a lower tone, that her mother might not hear, "because I doubt if I shall be able to read the finish when it is published."

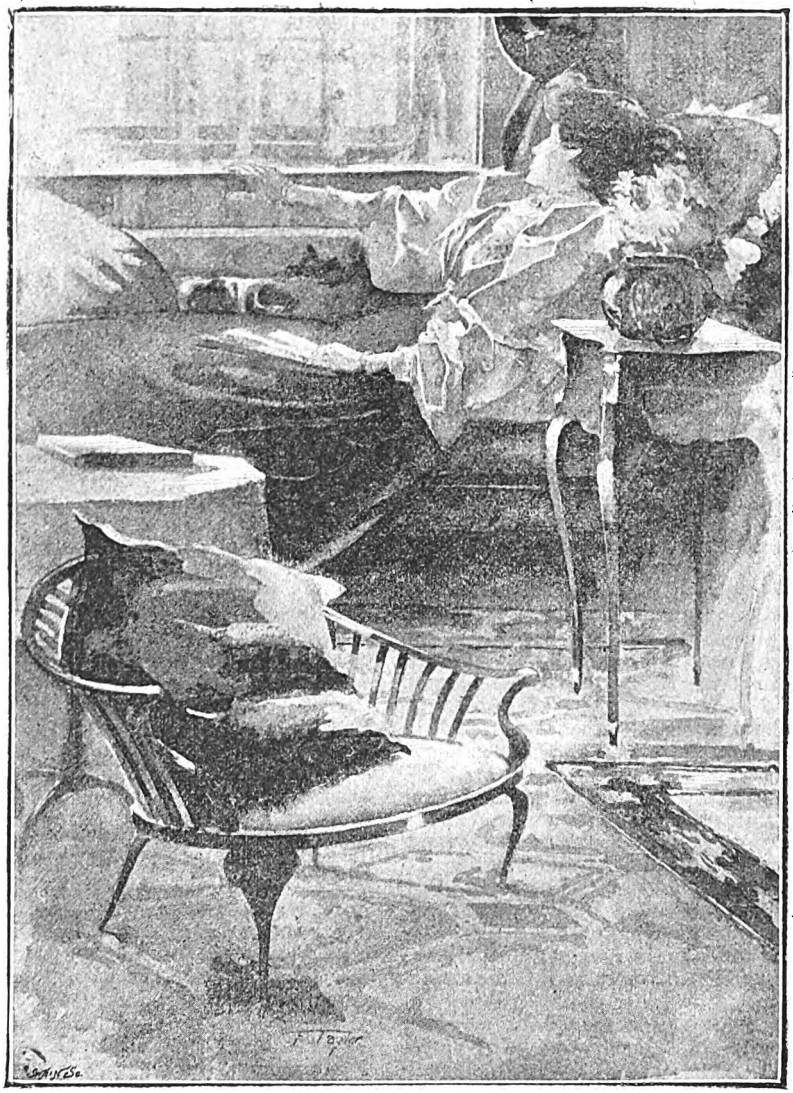
I sat beside her for half-an-hour and read, and when I had finished, there was a new light in her face. I fancied it was the light of renewed hope.

"Will the heroine live or die, Mr. Morton?" she asked.

"I wish I could tell you," I answered. "An author is sometimes as much in doubt as anyone regarding the future of his characters. But while there is life there is hope," I added lightly, "and because she is your namesake, Miss Wilmerdale, I hope her story may have a happy ending."

"I hope so, too," she said, with a most pathetic eagerness.

I controlled myself, and did not allow the story to progress too rapidly. At the end of a month, I went to her with the last chapters. Both the real and the fictitious Madge had improved wonderfully in that time. and the real one met me at the door, with a light step and merry laugh.



Madge was half reclining upon an easy lounge as I entered.

Fred Phillips was there, too, and he came forward and nodded to me more pleasantly than had lately been his habit. He was a frequent visitor at the house, keeping up the pretence of medical counsel; but it happened that we rarely met there.

He asked permission to remain and hear the final chapters read, and while I was not glad to have him, I could not well refuse.

With my audience of Madge, Fred, and Mrs. Wilmerdale, I read to the close. When I had finished, all joined in congratulating me; and Madge, with moist eyes, especially thanked me for what I had done for her. There was never any direct allusion between us as to just what that was, but of course it was perfectly understood.

I had meant to ask Madge a question at the close. That was, what reward should my heroine give to the man who had saved her life? I thought that I might, perhaps, make another chapter to the story if her answer suited me. But, with the others about, of course I did not ask it.

Mrs. Wilmerdale seemed to divine the situation, and put the question to me.

"Marry him," spoke up Fred, before anyone else could reply.

Surprised at finding an ally in such an unexpected quarter, I turned to thank him with a look, at the same time putting out a hand towards Madge to draw her to me, determined to tell her now how much I loved her.

Somehow, Fred seemed to guess my intention; he put himself between us and looked up at me laughingly.

"She has already consented," he said. "Congratulate us, Bob; we have been engaged for an hour." J. K. R.

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LABBY BOY'S WIN.

THE TRUE STORY OF A HORSERACE.

SURELY I had been dreaming! That prawn curry cooked *à la* Madrossi—"all same Madras boberchie cooking, sahib," as my Kitmutghar used to say—had made me drowsy. That's the way with these seductive curries; first one does not care for them overmuch, then one can eat curry three times a day and feel none the worse; next comes the time when they send one to sleep as though he had been poppy fed. This was the poppy time with me, and the whisky and soda at tiffin had not bettered it much.

Yes, just in the middle of my cheroot I had dropped off, sitting there in an easy-chair. The cheroot had cheerfully dived its red nose into my jarahm coat, and a hole like a bullet puncture bore testimony to the efficacy of the prawn curry and whisky-soda tiffin as a sedative.

Ye gods! how cool the verandah was to be sure; and how hot the bleaching sun over there against the white walls of the other hotel.

No man wakes under these circumstances without a cause; and so it must have been something unusual that did rouse me.

Ah! there it was again—there could be no doubt about that—my sporting ear had caught a low-toned conversation anent the pony races which were on.

I closed my eyes and went right on sleeping. I knew that I was asleep, for I heard one of the men say so presently.

"Don't talk so loud, Gomez," I heard an English voice say; "that fellow in the chair will hear you if you keep on talking like that."

"He is too far *that* side," replied Gomez in his best chee-chee baht (half-caste talk).

I was sleeping more soundly than ever now—I snored.

"Now don't you make any mistake about getting the money on," continued the English voice. "Labby Boy is fit to do the trick hands down, and, besides, *I ride him*, you see, and I'll take care that they never get near me. I've been put in to make the runnin', and I'll make it, and don't you forget it," and he chuckled like a cockatoo over thick cream.

The Lucknow Spring Races were on, albeit it was early for spring as understood of this country, being as yet February.

Labby Boy—and by the same token his name wasn't Labby Boy at all, though it began with an "L;" but even after nine years it is better that he read his history through another halter, and ditto the jockey, and ditto the owner, Lord George—was in the big handicap for Arabs, and had a rank outsider's chance.

I was a long way from being on velvet myself, in fact, I was on the commonest kind of cotton as far as having any of the bookies' money to go on with. They had cleared me out, and I was in no end of a hole. We had brought down a flyer from Migabad, and he had left us all stone broke. He was no good in the company he met at Lucknow.

Now I saw my way to getting some of it back, for I knew the speaker, "Tim" Doyle, was one of the best riders and judges in India.

So I slept hard and prayed that I might not sneeze or cough.

"Just keep your eye open and your mouth shut," he continued, "and when you see it say 20 to 1, you just nibble a little here and there, and don't give it away by being too anxious. Get the money all on and sit tight."

A *gharry* crawled up to the door, and the strong-voiced driver ceased to urge the ponies, which were not strong, and they stopped. "Tim," and his friend Gomez, the half-caste, got in; the variously dished wheels meandering in and out; the *gharry wallah* poured a volley of chronological abuse into the flapping ears of the hide-bound rats harnessed to the old trap upon which he sat; there was the flack, flack, of the whip, and they disappeared in the white heat out on the roadway.

Then I woke up.

I, too, took a *gharry* to the racecourse. I was in no hurry, so it did not matter; besides it was too hot to walk.

Ordinarily I should have been able to describe the races—how the game little Arab ponies, silver, golden, chesnut and blood bays fought it out on that beautiful green sward track, with its three-quarter mile straight run in; but that day my business was with the bookies.

I had received a providential tip, and if I played it well—as well as I had often played a horse I knew nothing about—I should not have to hand in my papers. I watched three races in the paddock and the stand inclosure. The bookies had won about a flour bag full of money each, which was about their usual form on an Indian course, where everybody plays his money on the horse and the bookmakers play theirs on the owner.

I made no move about Labby Boy. I knew better than to try and forestall Tim and his friend. When I saw the money going on from the right quarter, it would be quite time enough for mine, I knew.

The next race was the Bagdad Plate. That was Labby Boy's race. There were a half-dozen other Arabs in it. Problem and Young Jawan were about equal favourites, and the race was thought to be between them. They had met before down at the Calcutta meet, and Young Jawan had beaten Problem.

Problem was Labby Boy's stable companion, both being in Lord George's stable. So I knew that Tim was speaking from the book when he said that Labby Boy could do the trick.

"Six to four the field!" yelled "Parson" Britton, the tall, sanctimonious-faced bookmaker.

There was a rush among the betters to "get on." In a minute the cry all down the line of bookmakers was: "Five to four Problem, two to one Young Jawan!" They were backing Problem.

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Then I saw Lord George go down the line, notebook in hand. Then Problem was cut again; six to four *on* now, and I knew that Lord George was having a plunge.

There was a small army of small betters following Lord George up, and soon Problem was backed off the boards. All the money was for these two, Problem and Young Jawan, so the others travelled out in the betting; it was 20 to 1 the others and take your pick, Labby Boy, Silver Tail, Shahbaz, and the lot.

I was standing close to Millar and Britton's stand, for I knew that Gomez would make his first play to get the money on there, as they were the big bookmakers.

But I could not understand it at all. If Labby Boy was fit to do the trick, why did not Lord George know it? He and his friends were simply piling their money on Problem. Problem was always supposed to be a better horse than Labby Boy, too. But it was just this sort of reasoning that had nearly broken me already at the meeting. So I determined to follow this strong lead if I caught it in time, and let reason go to the dogs. I meant taking a regular flyer; if it came off, I should be able to pay up all round; if not—well, other men have had to send in their papers before.

Presently I saw Gomez edge up to where Britton was laying the odds.

I did not catch what Gomez said, but I heard Britton say: "Yes, 20 to 1, and he's a dead sure winner; 2,000 to 100; I'll lay you twice," and he looked as solemn as a judge, thinking how he would like to scoop in a couple of hundred from this innocent looking half-caste.

I saw Gomez shove up a couple of crisp bank-notes, and I didn't wait for anything further.

I went over to my friend Little Archer, who had bested me all through the meeting, and I made glad his heart with the money I piled on this "dead-un," as he called it. He laid me the odds freely, and chaffed me more freely still. "Did Lord George tell you," he said, "or did your dhoby (washerwoman)?"

He was happy, for Lord George had backed the other with him, and he looked on my investment as just so much money found.

"Don't put your friends on to it, or they'll break me," he laughed, as I started off, and then I went back and booked him another 1,000 to 50, just to teach him manners.

The betting was pretty well over by this time, for the horses were down at the post. I could see that Gomez had been down along the line of bookies, for Labby Boy had been cut a few points with some of them.

I went up in the grand stand, for I thought I should like to see this sort of thing of which I had no understanding.

"They're off!" cried someone, and a dozen voices repeated it.

It was two miles, so there would be plenty of time for observation.

At the start Silver Tail cut out the space at a clinking gait. He opened up a gap between himself and the others, and Lord George smiled.

This was as he had ordered it. Silver Tail was also in the same interest, a subsidised interest, being owned by a brother officer in the 101st Lancers, Lord Clapperton.

I could see Labby Boy lying next, and then came Problem and Young Jawan together.

Silver Tail had cut it out so lively that at the three-quarters he was done. Then Labby Boy went on, and took up the running. This also was as Lord George had ordered it, and Problem was keeping his place back with Young Jawan.

That was the programme just as it was being carried out, and Problem was to come away at the finish and win.

Lord George looked round and saw me standing just behind him.

"Have you got anything on him?" he asked.

"Yes, quite a lot," I replied discreetly.

He smiled approvingly. "You're all right," he said, "he'll win it hands down," thinking of Problem.

"I hope so," I added, thinking of Labby Boy.

At the mile Labby Boy had a long lead; at the mile and a half it was longer.

People began to look grave.

Why didn't Bung shake Problem up? Why didn't he come away? But those were his orders—to stay behind with Young Jawan.

When they turned into the straight, Labby Boy still had a tremendous lead. The others were coming now, fast, fast, and faster. Problem and Young Jawan were racing neck and neck. The jockeys were straining every nerve. The beautiful Arabs, dark bays both of them, were galloping side by side like two brothers—like the two horses of a matched pair; a blanket would have covered them both.

It was the race of a lifetime. Nose and nose they raced; low to the ground they thundered along. But the other, Labby Boy—would they catch him?

Lord George's face was serious enough now. I heard him say softly behind his blonde moustache: "Good heavens; look at Labby Boy. The very devil's in the horse. He's running away with Tim."

And so it seemed. It looked as though Tim were trying to come back to his horses now. Of course he could not take a direct pull at him, for Labby Boy and Problem were running under different owners' names, though they were really in the same interest—Lord George's.

Nine out of every ten of the men in that stand had their money either on Problem or Young Jawan. They were running neck and neck still, but here was this outsider, Labby Boy, who had made all the running and should have been beaten off by this time, according to all the ethics of racing, still in the lead—many lengths in the lead.

And so they flashed by the stand, Labby Boy lasting out to get home in front, with Problem drawing into second place, a length ahead of Young Jawan.

Then a great silence fell on the stand. Only the bookies had won and two others. But that was Gomez's secret and mine.

Anger and consternation made a racecourse of Lord George's face. He stood on the steps of the stand, just by the weighing scales, and said in a loud voice, with plenty of passion in it; "No more Tim Doyle for me!" But that was his way.

When Tim came in to weigh, there was a scene, for Lord George was the last man in the world to pocket anything like that quietly.

"I only obeyed orders, my lord," said Tim. "My orders were to take up the running from Silver Tail, and make it as far and as strong as I could, and I did so, and Labby Boy got home first; and that's all I know about it."

And I'm wondering if it was. Perhaps Gomez could say.

H. SADLER.

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The Traitor.

IN the little village of Padron, in Galicia, during the French invasion, lived Garcia de Paredes, a crabbed old bachelor and licensed apothecary. It was on a cold and unpleasant night in autumn, about ten o'clock, that a silent group of shadows came into the square known to-day as the Plaza de la Constitution. They were going towards Garcia de Paredes' apothecary shop, which had been securely closed since nine.

"What are we going to do?" asked one of the shadows.

"Break in the door," suggested a woman.

"And kill them," growled many voices.

"I will take care of the apothecary," said a little fellow.

"They say that more than twenty Frenchmen are taking supper with him to-night."

"Ah, if it were in my house! Three, billeted upon me, I have thrown into the well."

"And I," said a monk, in a flute-like voice, "have smothered two captains by leaving burning charcoal in their cell, which was mine before."

"And that wretch of an apothecary protects them!"

"Who would have thought it of Garcia de Paredes? It is not a month since he was the most valiant, the most patriotic, the most loyal man in the town."

"And to-night he is going to the French officers."

"Let us wait awhile," suggested an old man; "then we will enter, and not one of them shall be left alive."

While these manifestations were occurring at the door of the pharmacy, Garcia de Paredes and his guests pursued the god of pleasure with ardour.

Garcia de Paredes was about forty-five years of age. He was tall and as yellow as a mummy. His bald head shone with a phosphorescent lustre, and his black eyes, deep sunken under shaggy brows, were like mountain-imprisoned lakes that threaten sullenly.

The food was abundant, the wine good, the conversation animated. The Frenchmen laughed, sang, smoked, ate and drank at the same time. Garcia de Paredes joked, perhaps, even more than anyone else, and so eloquent had he been in favour of the imperial cause, that the soldiers of Napoleon had embraced him, praised him, and improvised songs in his honour.

"Señors," the apothecary had said, "the war that we Spaniards are waging is as stupid as needless. You sons of the Revolution came to rescue Spain from her traditional lethargy; to dissipate her religious shadows; to reconcile her ancient customs; and to teach her those useful truths that there is no God and no other life, and that penitence, abstinence, chastity, and other Catholic virtues are but Quixotic absurdities, improper and unnecessary for a civilised people; that Napoleon is the true Messiah, the redeemer of the people, the friend of humanity. Señors, may the Emperor live as long as I have to live!"

"Hurrah! Bravo!" cried the Frenchmen.

The apothecary bowed his head with an expression of unspeakable pain. Quickly he raised it as firm as before. He drank a glass of wine, and went on:

"An ancestor of mine, Garcia de Paredes, a barbarous fellow, a Samson, a Hercules, killed two hundred Frenchmen in one day. I think it was in Italy. You see he was not so fond of the French as I am. The King himself made him a knight, and he was more than once on guard at the Quirinal, when Alexander Borgia was Pope. Ha! ha! You didn't think I came of such distinguished ancestors. Well, this Diego Garcia de Paredes, this ancestor of mine, who has an apothecary for a descendant, captured Coszenza and Manfredonia, took Cerinolia by assault, and fought honourably at the battle of Pavia. There we made a King of France prisoner, and his sword has been in Madrid nearly three centuries, until we were robbed of it nearly three months ago by that son of an innkeeper, Murat, who is in command of your army."

Here the apothecary made another pause. Some of the Frenchmen were going to reply to him; but he, rising, and enforcing silence by his gesture, seized a glass convulsively and exclaimed, in a voice of thunder:

"I give you a toast, gentlemen: Hurrah for the Frenchmen of Francis the First and of Napoleon Bonaparte!"

"Hurrah!" cried the invaders, acknowledging their satisfaction. All drained their glasses.

About that time a noise was heard in the street, or, rather, at the shop door.

"Did you hear that?" asked the Frenchmen.

Garcia de Paredes smiled.

"They are coming to kill me," he said.

"Who?"

"My neighbours."

"What for?"

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"Because I am a French sympathiser. Several nights ago they surrounded my house. But what difference does that make to us? On with the feast!"

"Yes, on with it!" exclaimed the guests. "We are here to defend you." And, clinking the bottles and glasses, they shouted together: "Hurrah for Napoleon! Death to Ferdinand! Death to Castile!"

Garcia de Paredes waited till the toast was drunk, and then said in a mournful tone:

"Celedonio!"

The shop boy thrust his head through a small door. He dared not enter that inner room.

"Celedonio, bring some ink and paper," said the apothecary calmly.

The boy soon returned with the writing materials.

"Sit down," said the master, "and write the figures I will give you. Make two columns. At the head of the column at the right place, Debit, and at the head of the other, Credit."

"Señor," stammered the boy, "there is a mob at the door, crying 'Kill the apothecary!'"

"Be quiet. Leave them alone, and write what I tell you."

The Frenchmen laughed with admiration to see the pharmacist occupied in adjusting his accounts even while surrounded by death and ruin.

"Let us see, señors," said Garcia de Paredes. "We will finish our feast with a single toast. You—Captain—tell me—how many Spaniards have you killed since crossing the Pyrenees?"

"I," replied the Captain, arrogantly, twirling his moustache—— "I have killed—personally—with my sword—ten or perhaps twelve."

"Eleven, at the right," cried the apothecary, speaking to the boy.

The boy repeated, after writing:

"Debit, eleven."

"And you?" continued Garcia de Paredes, "I speak to you, Señor Julio."

"I—six."

"And you, Commandant?"

"I—twenty." "I—eight." "I—fourteen." "I—none." "I—don't know. I fired with my eyes shut." And so on, each one in his turn.

"Let me see, now, Captain," continued Garcia de Paredes. "We will begin again with you. How many Spaniards do you expect to kill during the remainder of the war, supposing it to last—say three years?"

"Oh—well, call it eleven."

"Eleven to the left!" dictated Garcia de Paredes, and Celedonio repeated:

"Credit, eleven!"

"And you?" inquired the apothecary, in the same order as before.

"I—fifteen." "I—twenty." "I—one hundred." "I—one thousand." And so on replied the Frenchmen.

"Divide them by ten, Celedonio," murmured the apothecary ironically, "and add each column separately."

At the end of a breathless silence, Celedonio, turning towards his master, read as follows:

"Debit, two hundred and eighty-five; credit, two hundred."

"That is to say," said Garcia de Paredes, "two hundred and eighty-five killed and two hundred sentenced to death. Total, four hundred and eighty-five victims."

At this moment the outer door of the shop was broken in.

"What time is it?" asked the apothecary, with the greatest composure.

"Eleven o'clock. But don't you hear them coming?"

"Let them come; it is time."

"Time!—for what?" murmured the Frenchmen, trying to rise. But they were so intoxicated they were unable to leave their chairs. "Let them come!" they cried, however, grasping their sabres with great difficulty and vainly endeavouring to get upon their feet.

Below in the shop was heard the noise of the crowd, and above the clamour rang out the unanimous and terrible cry:

"Death to the traitor!"

Garcia de Paredes, hearing that cry, sprang up as though electrified.

"Let them enter!" he shouted. "Open the door! Let them all come and see how a descendant of a soldier of Pavia can die."

The Frenchmen, terrified, stupefied, riveted to their chairs by an unconquerable lethargy, believing that the death of which the Spaniards spoke was about to enter the room, made desperate efforts to lift their sabres, which were lying on the table; but their fingers were unable to grasp the hilts.

At this moment the crowd poured into the room. There were more than fifty men and women armed with cudgels, daggers, and pistols, and all uttering wild cries.

"Kill them all!" shouted some of the women.

"Hold!" thundered Garcia de Paredes, with such a tone, such an attitude, such a look, that his cry, combined with the immovability and silence of the Frenchmen, infused a cold terror in the crowd.

"Put up your daggers," continued the apothecary, with a failing voice. "I have done more than you for my country. I have played the traitor—and—now you see the twenty officers of the invaders. Don't touch them; they are poisoned."

A cry of terror and admiration issued from the breasts of the Spaniards. They moved a step nearer to the guests, the greater part of whom were already dead, with their heads fallen forward, their arms outstretched upon the table, and their hands yet on the hilts of their swords.

"Hurrah for Garcia de Paredes!" then shouted the Spaniards, surrounding the dying hero.

"Celedonio," murmured the pharmacist, "the opium is all gone. Send to Corunna for opium."

Then he fell upon his knees.

Only at that did the neighbours perceive that the apothecary was also poisoned.

Then you might have seen a picture as impressive as it was dreadful. Women, sitting on the floor, were supporting in their arms the expiring patriot. The men had caught up the candles from the tables, and, on their knees, were lighting up that group of patriotism and affection. Twenty dead or dying were in the shadow, some of whom were falling to the floor, with horrifying thuds.

And at each dying gasp that he heard, at the fall of each Frenchman to the floor, a smile of glory illumined the face of Garcia de Paredes. A little later his spirit took flight.

PEDRO DE ALARCON.

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The Cardinal's Watch.

In Rome, my performances created a great sensation. His Holiness himself, on hearing of me, did me the signal honour of requesting a performance, at which I was advised all the dignitaries of the church would form my audience.

You can fancy with what eagerness I acquiesced in his wish, and what care I devoted to my preparations. After selecting all my best tricks, I ransacked my brains to invent one worthy of my illustrious spectators. But I had no need to search long, for chance, that most ingenious of inventors, came to my aid.

On the day prior to the performance, I was in the shop of one of the finest watchmakers of Rome, when a servant came in to ask if His Eminence the Cardinal de ———'s watch was repaired.

"It will not be ready till this evening," the watchmaker replied, "and I will do myself the honour of carrying it to your master myself." When the servant had retired, the tradesman said to me:

"This is a handsome and costly watch. The Cardinal to whom it belongs values it at more than ten thousand francs, for, as he ordered it himself of the celebrated Breguet, he fancies it must be unique of its kind. Strangely enough, though, only two days ago, a young scamp belonging to the city offered me a precisely similar watch, made by the same artist, for one thousand francs."

"Do you think," I said to him, "that this person is still inclined to dispose of his watch?"

"Certainly," the watchmaker replied. "This young prodigal, who has spent all his fortune, is now reduced to sell his family jewels."

"Well, I am anxious to purchase the watch, but it must be to-day. Have the kindness, then, to buy it for me. After that, you will engrave on it His Eminence's arms, so that the two watches may be perfectly similar, and on your discretion the profit you make by the transaction will depend."

The watchmaker knew me. He said:

"I only require a quarter of an hour to find him, and I am confident your offer will be accepted."

That same evening the watchmaker brought me two chronometers and handed me one. On comparing them it was impossible to detect the slightest difference. It cost me dear, but I was now certain of performing a trick which must produce a decided effect.

The next day I proceeded to the Pontiff's palace, and, at six o'clock, upon a signal given by the Holy Father, I stepped on the stage. I never had appeared before such an imposing assembly. Pius the Seventh, seated in a large arm-chair on a daïs, occupied the foreground; near him were seated the cardinals, and behind them were the different prelates and dignitaries of the church.

I could not describe to you all the pleasure I felt on this evening; and the spectators seemed to take such lively interest in all they saw, that I felt myself in unusual spirits. The Pope himself was delighted.

"But, M. Torrini," he continually said, with charming simplicity, "how can you do that? I shall be quite ill with merely trying to guess your secrets."

After the "blind man's game of piquet," which literally astounded the audience, I performed the trick of the "burnt writing," in which I received an autograph I set great store by. This is how the trick is done:

A person writes a sentence or two; he is then requested to burn the paper, which must be found afterwards intact in a sealed envelope. I begged His Holiness to write a sentence; he consented, and wrote as follows:

"I have much pleasure in stating that M. Torrini is an amiable sorcerer."

The paper was burned, and nothing could depict the Pope's astonishment on finding it in the centre of a large number of sealed envelopes. I received his permission to keep this autograph.

To end my performance and set the crown on my exploits, I now proceeded to the trick I had invented for the occasion.

Here I had several difficulties to contend with; the greatest was certainly to induce Cardinal de—— to lend me his watch, and that without asking him directly for it, and to succeed I must have recourse to a ruse. At my request several watches were offered me, but I returned them with the excuse, more or less true, that as they had no peculiarity of shape, it would be difficult to prove the identity of the one I chose.

"If any gentleman among you," I added, "has a watch of rather large size—this was a peculiarity of the Cardinal's—and would kindly lend it to me, I should prefer it as better suited for the experiment. I need not say I will take the greatest care of it. I only wish to prove its superiority, if it really possess it, or, on the other hand, to marvellously improve it."

All eyes were naturally turned on the Cardinal, who, it was known, set great value on the exaggerated size of his chronometer. He asserted, with some show of reason, perhaps, that the works acted more freely in a large case. However, he hesitated to lend me his beloved watch till Pius the Seventh said to him:

"Cardinal, I fancy your watch will suit exactly; oblige me by handing it to M. Torrini."

His Eminence assented, though not without numberless precautions, and when I had the chronometer in my hands, I drew the attention of the Pope and the cardinals to it, while pretending to admire the works and handsome chasing.

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"Is your watch a repeater?" I then said to the Cardinal.

"No, sir, it is a chronometer, and watches of that degree of accuracy are not usually incumbered with unnecessary machinery."

"Indeed! a chronometer; then it must be English," I said, with apparent simplicity.

"What, sir," the Cardinal replied, as if stung by my remark, "do you think chronometers are made only in England? On the contrary, the best specimens have always been made in France. What English maker can be compared with Pierre Leroy, Ferdinand Berthoud, or Breguet, above all, who made that chronometer for me?"

The Pope began to smile at the Cardinal's energy.

"Well, then, we will select this chronometer," I said, putting a stop to the conversation I had purposely started. "I have then, gentlemen, to prove to you its solidity and excellent qualities. Now for the first trial."

And I let the watch fall to the floor. A cry of terror rose on all sides. while the Cardinal, pale and trembling, bounded from his seat, saying, with ill-suppressed wrath:

"You are playing a very sorry jest, sir."

"But, monseigneur," I said, with the greatest calmness, "you have no occasion to be frightened, I merely wish to prove to the gentlemen the perfection of your watch. I beg you not to be alarmed; it will escape scathless from all the trials I subject it to."

With these words, I stamped on the case, which broke, flattened, and soon presented but a shapeless mass. At first I really fancied the Cardinal was going into a fit; he could scarcely restrain his passion; but the Pope then turned to him:

"Come, Cardinal, have you no confidence in our sorcerer? For my part, I laugh like a child at it, being convinced there has been some clever substitution."

"Will your Holiness permit me to remark," I said, respectfully, "that there has been no substitution? I appeal to His Eminence, who will recognise his own watch."

And I offered the Cardinal the shapeless relics of his watch. He examined them anxiously, and finding his arms engraved inside the case, said, with a deep sigh:

"Yes, that is certainly my watch. But," he added drily, "I know not how you will escape, sir; at any rate, you should have played this unjustifiable trick on some other object that might be replaced, for my chronometer is unique."

"Well, your excellency, I am enchanted at that circumstance, for it must enhance the credit of my experiment."

The identity of the Cardinal's watch thus proved, I wished to pass into the Pope's pocket the remaining one of the pair. But I could not dream of this so long as His Holiness remained seated. Hence I sought some pretext to make him rise, and soon found one.

A brass mortar with an enormous pestle was now brought in. I placed it on the table, threw in the fragments of the chronometer, and began pounding furiously. Suddenly a slight detonation was heard, and a vivid light came from the vessel, which cast a ruddy hue over the spectators, and produced a magical appearance. All this while, bending over the mortar, I pretended to see something that filled me with the liveliest astonishment.

Through respect for the Pope, no one ventured to rise, but the Pontiff, yielding to his curiosity, approached the table, followed by a portion of the audience. They might look and look; nothing was to be seen but flame.

"I know not whether I must attribute it to the dazed state of my brain," said His Holiness, passing his hand over his eyes, "but I can distinguish nothing."

"I only require a quarter of an hour to find him."

I, too, had much the same idea; but far from confessing it, I begged the Pope to come round the table and choose a more favourable spot. During this time I had slipped my reserve watch into the Pope's pocket. The experiment was certain, and the "Cardinal's watch" was by this time reduced to a small ingot which I held up to the spectators.

"Now," I said, "I will restore this ingot to its original shape, and the transformation shall be performed during its passage to the pocket of a person who cannot be suspected of complicity."

"Aha!" the Pope said in a jocular tone, "that is becoming a little too strong. But what would you do, my good sorcerer, if I asked you to chose my pocket?"

"Your Holiness need only order for me to obey."

"Well, M. Torrini, let it be so," was the Pope's ready reply.

I took the ingot in my hands, showed it to the company, and it disappeared on my uttering the word "Pass!"

The Pope, with manifestations of utter incredulity, thrust his hand in his pocket. I soon saw him blush with confusion and draw out the watch, which he handed to the Cardinal as if afraid of burning his fingers.

When my audience were assured that I had fulfilled my promise, I received the applause so successful a trick deserved.

The next day the Pope sent me a rich diamond snuff-box, while thanking me for all the pleasure I had occasioned him.

This performance created a great sensation in Rome, and everyone flocked to see my marvels. Perhaps they hoped to witness the famous trick of the "broken watch," which I had performed at the Vatican. But, though I was then very extravagant, I was not so mad as to spend ten hundred francs a night in a trick.

Percy Windred.

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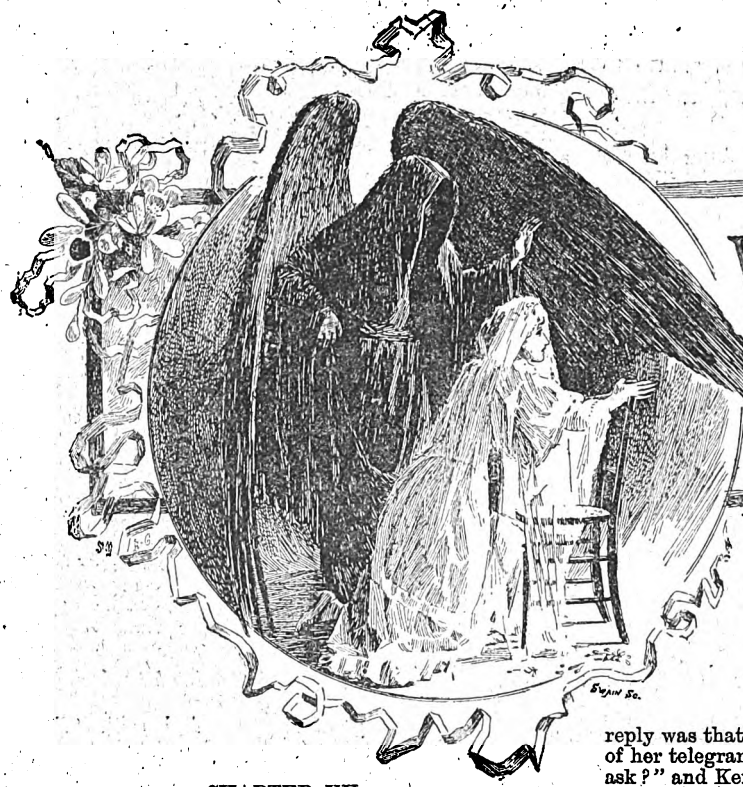

THE WYTHECOMBE MYSTERY: A ROMANCE.

By J. K. Leys.
Illustrated by S. Mar. Fitz-Gerald.

CHAPTER XV.

A RAY of light, sudden and keen as a lightning-flash, darted into Kenyon's mind from the last word of that message.

Some one, poor Jane Unwin most likely, had used Miss Denver's name to bring Vere to Paddington terminus that Tuesday afternoon. It was Winnie, his affianced bride, he went to meet. Nay more, if it was Jane Unwin who sent the telegram, she must have known that if she had telegraphed in her own name Vere would not have come to the railway-station to meet her. Therefore it was impossible that the relations between them could then have been of a very intimate character, whatever they might have been in the past.

For a long time Kenyon stood with the bit of paper in his hand, trying to realise what were the features of the landscape which this new light revealed to him.

First of all, it was clear that Vere must be acquitted of anything like double dealing. He might be ill, or wounded, or dead, or he might be in danger from the law. Any one of these causes might account for his strange silence. But the odious suspicion that he had kept up an intrigue with Jane Unwin during his courtship, and had at the last moment preferred to wound and insult his bride, and efface himself from the world, rather than give up the dishonourable connection, must be abandoned. So far, at least, Vere's character was cleared.

But what use could be made of this discovery?

That was a question Kenyon could not answer; and though he pondered over it for the greater part of the night he could find no way of turning the telegram to any good account.

Next morning he dispatched a message by wire, not to the Rector as he had at first intended, but to Katherine Dale, asking her to inquire of Winifred Denvers whether she or anyone acting for her had sent a telegram to Vere on the Tuesday on which he disappeared. As he expected, the reply was that no such message had been sent. At the end of her telegram Kate had added the words: "Why do you ask?" and Kenyon answered them by letter, pointing out the significance of what he had found.

That day Kenyon spent in the City, where business connected with the bank detained him till a late hour in the evening.

Next morning before he left his hotel a card was brought to him. He started and frowned as he read the name inscribed on it—Paul Shenstone.

Harold had hoped that Shenstone and he would never meet again; and here, already, the man was dogging his footsteps! But Kenyon felt that he had no sufficient excuse for refusing to see him.

"Show the gentleman in," he said to the waiter.

"You are surprised to see me, I dare say," said Paul, coming forward with outstretched hand; "but I had to come up to town last night on some rather important business; and I thought I would look in upon you to ask about that telegram you sent to Miss Dale yesterday. I happened to be with her when she received it, and we speculated a good deal as to what you could mean by it. I fancy you must have discovered something new."

"It is very good of you to take so much interest in the matter," said Harold drily, but politely. And indeed Shenstone's tone was that of serious concern.

"Personally, I have nothing to do with Vere's fate," returned Shenstone; "but, of course, I am naturally curious about the poor fellow; and I would be very glad if I could be of any use to you. Miss Dale seemed to think that I might be of some service."

Kenyon muttered a few civil words, and briefly told how and where he had found the telegram which was virtually a forgery.

Shenstone kept his eyes fixed on Harold's face while he was speaking, and when he had ended, dropped them towards the floor.

"Don't you think this changes the situation very much?" asked Kenyon.

Shenstone shook his head.

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"If you ask me," said he, "I confess that I don't think it does. You see, we have the fact of the poor girl's death to account for. What I am afraid of is, that if we stir in the matter we shall do your friend great and irreparable injury."

"You mean by discovering his retreat?"

Shenstone nodded.

"Then you think still that he—that Launcelot Vere, who never to my knowledge injured a living creature—shot, deliberately murdered, that poor girl?"

Shenstone opened his eyes in surprise.

"I thought no one doubted that," he said.

"You did not know him as I did," said Harold. Shenstone's cool manner, his quiet assumption of the guilt of the missing man, irritated him.

"True," said Paul. "I look at the case simply as an outsider."

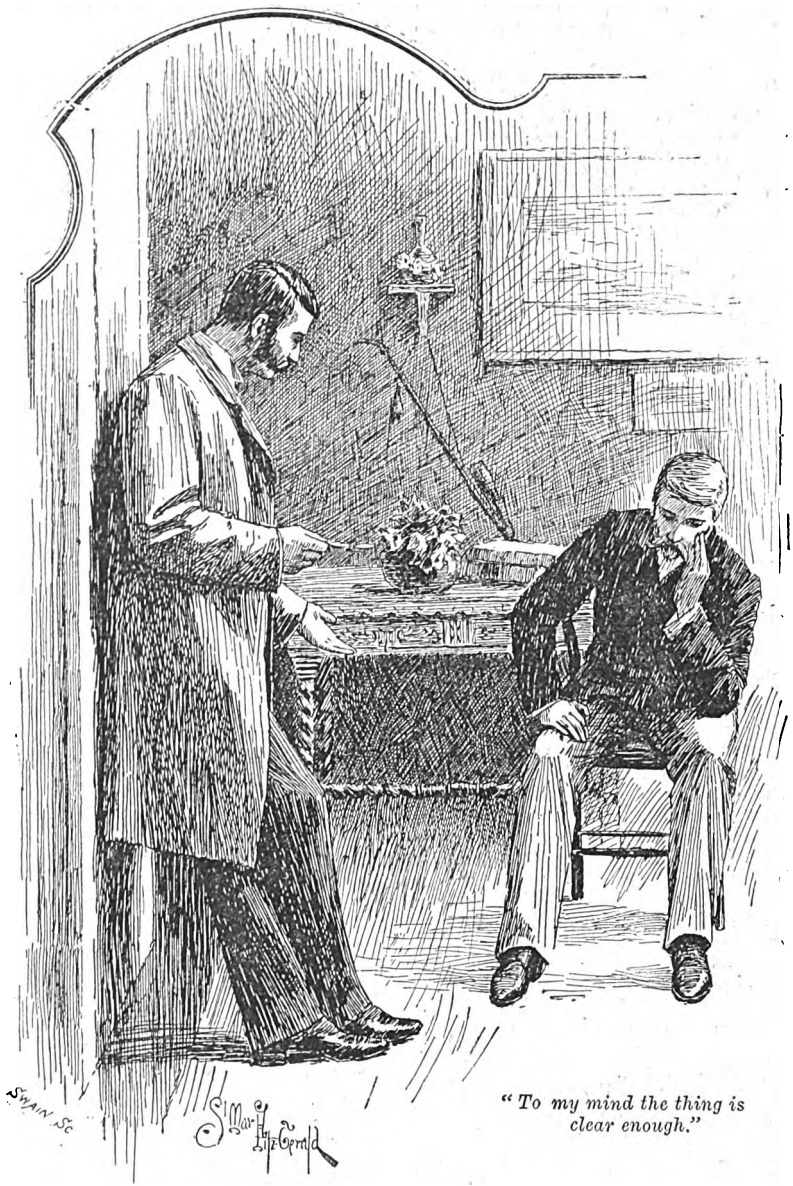
"And how does it strike you? How would you explain the facts?"

"To my mind the thing is clear enough," answered Paul. "Here is an amiable, but perhaps rather weak young man, who has a love affair with a young woman of stronger will than himself. Perhaps she thought he had used her badly. She hears that he is going to marry another, and she is torn by various passions—love, jealousy, wounded self-esteem, and the rest. She determines that she will make a last attempt to regain what she has lost.

"She knows that Vere will not attend to a message sent in her own name. Therefore she uses her rival's name, and by that means (as the railway guard told you) obtains an interview with Vere. He left the station in her company, and no doubt she succeeded in establishing her old influence over him. She works on his pity, perhaps, or his admiration for her beauty—we know by the sketches you found in his studio that he did admire her greatly.

"Well, next day he realises what he has done—that he has made a return to his old honourable life impossible, that all his old friends will look on him with scorn, that Winifred Denvers is lost to him for ever. He makes no sign, simply because he cannot face his disgrace. He hates himself, and loathes the sight of the woman who has been his ruin.

"They are out walking together in the quietest neighbourhood they can find, when they have a quarrel. Each reproaches the other, until Vere, maddened by the sharp stings of the woman's tongue, and by the sharper stings of remorse, threatens her with the revolver. Perhaps she retorts by some cruel taunt; and then either by accident, or carried away by a gust of passion, he fires. She falls, and he finds that she is dead.



"To my mind the thing is clear enough."

"Concealment or flight is now his only thought. Probably he went back to his lodgings, invented some plausible story to account for his companion's disappearance, and then immediately changed his quarters. Don't you think the course of events must have been something like that?"

Kenyon sighed deeply.

"It seems only too probable," he answered.

"Then, if we search for the poor, unhappy man, and let the light in upon the dark corner where he is hiding, we may simply be handing him over to justice. We must not forget the verdict of the Coroner's jury."

"I don't forget it," said Harold, "but I am more anxious than ever to discover the truth about my old friend; and I can keep his secret if I find it out. There is one man who can throw some light on the matter—the man who dined with Vere at the 'Cock Pheasant' that Tuesday evening. I have a fancy—it is only a fancy, of course—that that man was Arthur Beaumont. Somehow, I was not favourably impressed with that fellow. I shall call on him, and ask him point blank whether he was at the 'Cock Pheasant' with Vere that evening."

"And how will you know whether he tells you the truth?"

"I shall see it in his face."

Shenstone smiled as he answered. "But, my dear fellow,

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supposing that your penetration is equal to that strain upon it, you won't be able to prove that he is lying, even though you may feel sure that he is. If you like to leave him to me, I should take a different course with him altogether."

"Why can't I do myself what you advise?" asked Harold quickly.

Shenstone hesitated just a second before he replied.

"Why, you see, you have been at him already about this business, and he knows that you are trying to find Vere. Besides, he may resent your questioning him so much, even if he has nothing to conceal. Now, if it were my place, I should go to him as a client, and ask his advice on some imaginary point. Then I would ask him to lunch. Of course, from obvious motives, he would accept my invitation. I should take him to the 'Cock Pheasant,' and take the waiter aside—stout, sandy-haired man, I think you said——?"

"Capital!" he cried. "You ought to have been a detective."

Kenyon nodded.

"Under pretence of consulting him about the wine. Then I would recall the incident of the overcoat to his mind, point out Beaumont, and ask him if he was the gentleman who was Vere's companion that Tuesday evening. If he said 'No,' I should order some light claret. If he said 'Yes,' I should order a magnum of champagne; and before that lunch was ended I should know all that Beaumont knew about Launcelot Vere."

Kenyon laughed aloud.

"Capital!" he cried. "You ought to have been a detective. I should be really very much obliged if you will call on Beaumont for me, and get the necessary information out of him, particularly as I have to be in the City nearly the whole day. I won't dream of suggesting ways and means to you, for you are evidently much better up to this sort of work than I am. Only let me know the result of your investigations, and I shall be infinitely obliged to you."

Shenstone readily undertook to do what was asked of him, and promised to call at the hotel that evening, and let Kenyon know what he had done and how much he had learned.

CHAPTER XVI.

A STAB IN THE DARK.

ON the evening of the next day Shenstone drove up to the hotel at which Kenyon was staying.

"I'm in a dreadful hurry," he said, the moment Harold made his appearance. "I am going home to-night, and I have barely time to catch the night express. I just looked in for a moment, as I said I would come and tell you the result of my interview with Beaumont."

"Have you seen him?" interrupted Harold.

"Yes, I have; and I find you are entirely wrong in your idea that he was in Vere's company that Tuesday. The waiter failed to recognise him—said, in fact, he wasn't the man."

Kenyon's face fell.

"Now, my dear fellow, I must be off. I suppose I shall see you down in Darnport to-morrow or next day?"

"No," said Harold abruptly, "I mean to stay here until I ferret out something satisfactory about Vere. It is quite clear that he never expected to see Miss Unwin when he went to Paddington that Tuesday evening, and much less did he intend to elope with her. I want to know how it was that (if your theory is the true one) he came to be dining, not in her company, but with some stranger, within an hour of his meeting her. I want to discover who that stranger was, and when and where he last saw Launcelot Vere. And, in short, I want to find Vere; and I shall not rest until I do find him."

"I thought you had agreed with me that it might be better, for your friend's own sake, not to try to discover his place of concealment," said Shenstone.

"Not exactly," said Kenyon. "You suggested that it might be so; and the point had occurred to me before; but I don't think there is any real danger to Vere in my seeking for him. The police need not know anything of my actions. And he may be in need of my help. At any rate, I mean to find him."

"Well," said Shenstone after a pause, "I can only say again, that if I can aid you in any way you have only to say the word. You will keep me informed of what steps you take, and I can come up again if necessary. I suppose you must go back to Darnport before long."

"I mean to stay in London till this mystery is cleared up," said Harold.

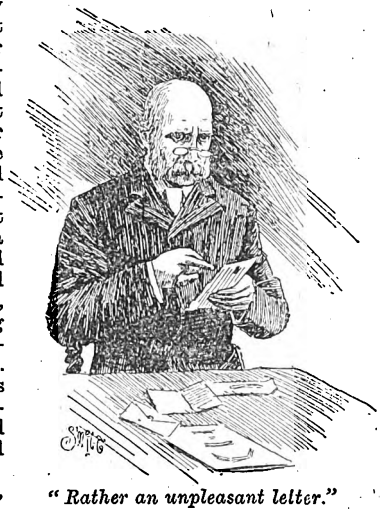
"And what will——"

Shenstone checked himself suddenly and looked at his watch.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I must be off at once if I mean to catch my train. Good-bye again. Be sure to wire me if anything turns up."

In less than a minute Shenstone was driving away from the hotel at a rapid rate.

Besides his old friendship with Vere, Kenyon had another reason for determining to prosecute his search for the missing man. He had had a letter from Winnie Denvers, telling him, in answer to the telegram he had sent to Kate, that she had never telegraphed to Vere that she was going to London. And in this letter the poor girl's anxiety as to her lover's fate was so pathetically revealed, that Kenyon's heart was touched; and he swore to himself that, if patience and determination could accomplish the task, Vere should be found. That is, if he were still alive; for Harold had often wondered sadly if his friend had not been murdered, or killed in some accident. But it seemed very unlikely that Vere, who had never been known to take too much liquor, had fallen into bad company; he was not known to have a single enemy; and as for accident, had his body been found, the fact must long ago have been reported to the police. Whether he was dead or alive, Kenyon was resolved that he would find out the truth.



"Rather an unpleasant letter."

For some days, however, he was unable to make any progress in his quest. The greater part of his time was necessarily spent in the City, for he was now employed in business connected with the bank. But his chief difficulty was to know how he could take the first step towards the accomplishment of the task he had set himself. There seemed to be an impenetrable darkness on every side. Jane Unwin had been buried, but no one had

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come forward to say where she had been living these last few days of her life. Kenyon sometimes thought with a shudder that Shenstone's theory of what must have happened seemed by far the most likely one.

One morning, when Kenyon went down to the bank in Threadneedle Street, he was told that Mr. Bonnington had returned, and shortly afterwards he was asked to step into the partners' private room.

As soon as he entered the apartment, he saw that something was amiss. The three partners were seated round a large table, and they looked at their district manager coldly. Even Mr. Bonnington, Harold's friend, merely nodded towards him, and did not offer him his hand as usual.

"Take a seat, Mr. Kenyon," said Mr. Carr, the senior partner.

"We have had rather an unpleasant letter this morning," he continued after a short pause, "from a solicitor in your part of the world. He complains that he had a client who wished to transact some important business with us, and that he called at the branch bank at Darnport several times, three or four weeks ago, and did not succeed in finding anyone capable of attending to it. He also says that he called several times lately about the same matter, but found you were still from home, and that his client, being annoyed at the delay, has determined to go elsewhere for the money he wanted. Now, we know that you have been in town attending to our affairs for the last few days; but your earlier absence without leave requires to be explained. You can see for yourself that it is a serious matter. We are newly established in Darnport, and cannot afford to lose business. Still less can we afford to have it said that our manager does not care to get customers. What have you to say?"

Kenyon's face had alternately reddened and grown pale while Mr. Carr was speaking. The only days he had been absent from business had been those he had spent in London making inquiries about Vere; and he bitterly regretted that he had not asked leave, or at least mentioned the fact, without waiting for Mr. Bonnington's return. It was too late now to rectify the error.

"It is quite true," he said, "that a short time ago I was absent from my post for two or three days, perhaps three or four days, on urgent business of a private nature." He paused for a moment, asking himself whether he should be more explicit; and then remembering the terrible charge that was hanging over Vere's head, he thought it wiser not to enter into details. "I admit that it was an irregularity, and that I ought to have asked leave; but the matter was so urgent that, to tell the truth, it did not occur to me to do so."

No one made any reply to this apology; and Kenyon understood that his explanation was not deemed quite satisfactory.

"I am afraid," he said, drawing himself up, "that I can offer no better excuse for my conduct; but if you wish it I am ready to tender my resignation."

"You are going too fast, Mr. Kenyon," said the senior partner. "We have been perfectly well satisfied with your conduct hitherto; and we should not think of asking you to resign for a matter which, in itself, is not of very great importance. But we cannot help blaming you for being absent without leave, and we must insist that it shall not occur again. On that understanding we are willing that, as soon as the business you have now on hand is finished, you should go back to Darnport and resume your duties."

With these words Mr. Carr turned to his desk as if no more need be said on the subject.

Harold accepted the reproof in silence. He rose from his chair, bowed, and turned to leave the room.

But before reaching the door he stopped short.

"It seems very extraordinary to me," he said, "that anyone should have called at the bank at Darnport, even once, not to say several times, without my being informed of it. I don't understand how it can have happened."

"Well, you see it *has* happened," said Mr. Carr; "all I ask is, don't let it happen again."

"May I ask the name of your correspondent, sir?"

"Certainly not," returned the banker with some asperity. "The business he came to introduce to our firm has gone elsewhere, so it would be useless to follow it up. Our correspondent asks us not to mention his name; and I consider that it would be a breach of confidence to do so."

Harold bowed a second time, and left the room.

As he passed through the public part of the establishment Kenyon saw his old friend Mr. Daunt standing at the

"Heard any news of your mysterious friend?"

counter. He stopped a moment on his way out to ask after the old lawyer's health.

"Well? Never was better in my life," responded Mr. Daunt. "Just wait till I get this cheque cashed, and I will go along the street with you. Heard any news of your mysterious friend?" he asked.

"Not exactly, but I picked up a bit of information about him in rather a curious way," answered Kenyon; and he told his companion of the telegram he had found.

"And now," he continued, "the provoking part of it is that just when I had resolved to throw my whole energy into the search for Vere, I am ordered back to Darnport, where I shan't be able to do anything. I have a great mind to throw up my post rather than consent to return at this juncture. I had intended to ask for a month's leave of absence; but, after what happened this morning, it would be useless to make a request of that sort."

Mr. Daunt threw a glance at Harold which said: "What happened this morning?" and Harold told him what had transpired in the partners' private room.

"Humph!" said the old lawyer. "Very careless of your subordinates, I must say, not to tell you of these visits on your return."

"That's the strange part of it," said Kenyon. "Green, my cashier, is a most careful man. It is inconceivable that he should have allowed any one, especially a solicitor, to call several times without putting the visits down in the call-book."

"Indeed?" queried the lawyer, with a quick look at his friend.

"He is a model of carefulness," said Kenyon.

"Then I should telegraph to him and make inquiries," said Mr. Daunt. "Come up to my office and tell me what reply you get; I am curious to know what it is."

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CHAPTER XVII.

IN WHICH KENYON DOES A LITTLE DETECTIVE WORK ON HIS OWN ACCOUNT.

Two hours later Harold burst into Mr. Daunt's room in a state of considerable excitement.

"Green assures me positively," he cried, "that no such

'Then you think——?" he began.

visits as Mr. Carr told me of were paid at our bank while I was away. Here is his telegram. He says: 'I know all solicitors within fifty miles. No one called in your absence except the three I mentioned to you.' Isn't that rather singular?"

"Some people might think so," said the lawyer with one of his peculiar smiles.

"What do you mean?" asked Harold.

"Only that I am not very much surprised at the reply you have got. I should have been surprised if it had been the other way."

"Why? How on earth——?"

"Didn't it strike you that that was an odd sort of letter for a solicitor to write?"

"Well, yes; I thought some spiteful fellow had done it."

"Have you an enemy among the members of our fraternity down there?"

"Not one, that I am aware of."

"Humph! Have you a friend among them, then? Anyone you could count on to do you a service?"

"Certainly. There's young Cresswell, a better fellow never lived. He would do anything for me."

Mr. Daunt went to a bookcase and took down a law list.

"Here is a list of the attorneys practising in Darnport and the surrounding district," he said. "You will be able, I suppose, to tell offhand that some of them could not have written that letter?"

"Certainly."

"Just make me out a list of those who might possibly, so far as you know, have done such a thing."

In ten minutes the list was ready.

"Now," said Mr. Daunt, "you had better telegraph to your friend Cresswell, and ask him to see every one of those men, and ask whether he called on you at such and such a time. You can write by to-night's post and explain more fully."

"Mr. Daunt," said Harold, in a hesitating way, "you are very kind indeed to interest yourself so much about my affairs; but it seems to me a pity to waste my friend's time and my own in following this thing up. Someone has played me a shabby trick; but I am not particularly anxious to find out who did it."

The old lawyer looked down and smiled.

"I think you ought to sift this matter to the bottom," said he.

"Why?"

"Because, when you find out the man who wrote that letter to your employers——" Mr. Daunt paused and looked his visitor full in the face.

"Yes?" asked Harold with a smile. "When I find him out, what then?"

The lawyer put his arms on the table, leant forward, and looked with his glittering blue eyes into Harold's face.

"Then," he said, "then, perhaps, you will put your finger on the secret of your friend Vere's disappearance."

Kenyon started violently, and drew back in his chair.

"Then you think——?" he began.

"I think that somebody is very anxious that you should give up this quest, and go back to your quiet life at Darnport. And I think, too, that he has taken a tolerably effectual way of securing his object."

Harold jumped to his feet, struck the table with his fist so that a cloud of dust rose from the bundles of papers lying on it, seized the list of names which he had written, wrung his friend's hand, and hurried out of the office.

Next day he received the following telegram:

"Have seen all whose names you wired, except three who were on holiday all last month and have not returned, and other two. All deny calling on you, I have no doubt sincerely. The other two are Williams, very unlikely, and Simpson. Simpson now in London. Can't get his town address, but agents, Clover and Fry, Newgate Street. Better try to find him."

Kenyon immediately acted on his friend's advice.

He went to Messrs. Clover and Fry's; and though they had not seen Mr. Simpson lately, they were able to tell him that that gentleman, when he came to town, usually stayed at Duncannon's Hotel in Holborn.

A gentleman who had evidently been dining freely.

To Duncannon's Hotel Kenyon betook himself, and learnt to his great satisfaction, that Mr. Simpson was actually staying there. He was not in, however, and it was impossible to tell when he would return. This, Kenyon thought, mattered little. It was already late in the afternoon; and he decided to dine at the hotel and wait there till Simpson should turn up.

Harold lingered over his dinner as long as he could, and, then adjourned to the smoking-room. He did not give his name to the "lady manager," but tipped one of the waiters,

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and obtained from him a promise that he would let him know the moment Mr. Simpson returned. It was part of Kenyon's plan that Simpson should believe that his presence at the hotel was purely accidental.

Hour after hour went by, and Harold had perused (often with hardly an idea of what he was reading) every paper in the establishment, and yet the solicitor did not make his appearance.

At last, about half-past ten, the friendly waiter ushered into the smoking-room a gentleman who had evidently been dining freely. A glance told Harold that it was Simpson. He remembered having seen his face—the face of a cunning and unscrupulous man — in the streets of Darnport.

At the sight of Kenyon, the lawyer dropped on a lounge, and then, hastily rising, seemed about to leave the room.

But Kenyon rose and went up to him.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Simpson?" he said. "Don't you remember me? My name's Kenyon. I'm manager of the bank at Darnport, you know."

"Mr. Kenyon! To be sure, sir! I hope I see you well, Mr. Kenyon."

"Very well, thanks. May I offer you a cigar?"

To Harold's great satisfaction Simpson accepted the cigar and sat down, calling at the same time for whisky and soda.

After a little talk about nothing in particular, Kenyon thought it was time to open fire.

"I was sorry I was out when you called the other day at the bank," he said. "You came two or three times, I believe, without finding me in."

If the lawyer had had his wits about him he might perhaps have been ready with some lie that would have served his purpose for the moment; but taken unawares as he was, he allowed his face to betray him.

He looked surprised, afraid, bewildered, all at the same moment. It was all he could do to mutter something about "a mistake."

"Then you have *not* been calling at the bank at Darnfort lately?"

"No—not for some time."

"Why, then, did you write to my principals and pretend that you had tried to see me several times in vain, and had been forced to take your business elsewhere? Don't deny the fact, Mr. Simpson! I *know* you wrote that letter," said Kenyon firmly. There was evidence enough in the lawyer's face that the accusation brought against him was just.

He muttered something that was quite inaudible.

"You are a solicitor," continued Harold. "Did it not strike you that it might be rather a dangerous thing to slander a man to his employers in that way? If I lose my post an action would lie, eh? No doubt of that I imagine."

"Upon my word, Mr.—a—Mr. Kenyon, I admit nothing, you understand; but speaking strictly in confidence, and without prejudice, you understand, I am certain that it was a mere joke."

"Pretty kind of joke—rather an expensive one for some people, perhaps. But who got you to do it? Who asked you to write that letter to my principals?"

"Me, Mr. Kenyon! I never wrote any letter!"

"Oh, very well, we must prove the handwriting, that's all."

The solicitor turned greenish, and Harold went on.

"But if you choose to tell who played this trick on me, I will promise you that he shall never find out that you informed against him, and also that you shall hear no more of this matter."

The promise of indemnity broke down the attorney's last scruples.

"I'm a poor man, Mr. Kenyon," he said; "and twenty pounds aren't to be come by every day. It was only a harmless jest, he said, or I'd never have consented to do it. But I think you said that no harm had been done?"

"That has to be seen," said Harold. "But I promise you that if you give me the true name, *you* shall not suffer. *Now*, who is it?"

The frightened little man glanced around, as if fearful that some one should overhear him; then, bending over, he put his lips to Kenyon's ear and whispered the name "*Paul Shenstone.*"

Whispered the name "Paul Shenstone."

(*To be continued.*)

THE FRESH AIR FUND

was started by the editor of *Pearson's Weekly* and *Short Stories* in 1892. During the summer of 1892 20,600 poor children enjoyed a day in the country through its agency; in 1893, 40,230; in 1894, 74,074; and last summer, 92,061.

The total expenses for travelling and two splendid meals amount to ninepence only per day for each child. All the expenses of management are defrayed by the promoters of the F.A.F. Each ninepence, therefore, contributed by a reader of *Short Stories* gives to one child a day's complete happiness.

This year we hope to send more than 100,000 children for a day in the country. And to do this we shall require all the assistance that our readers can give us.

In past years the subscribers to *Short Stories* have been most generous in helping to swell the Fresh Air Fund total. We are looking towards them to help us still more this summer.

All subscriptions will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly.*

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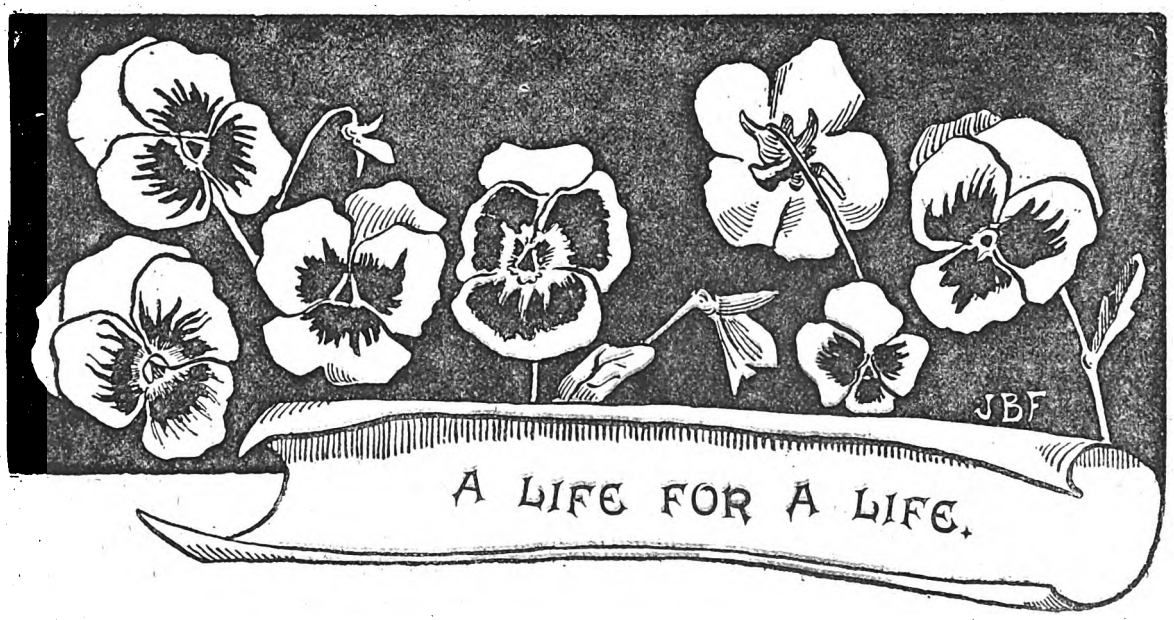

I AM going to give the history of the whole affair to the world. I am perfectly calm and reasonable as I sit down to write, though my head is burning, and my hands are icy cold. And I think that people ought to know the truth; for the way that things have turned out with me may serve as a warning to others who may be tempted hereafter, as I was so many years ago.

I was Dr. Sennet's only child; and, after the death of my mother, though I was still a mere girl, I was given full authority to rule over his shoulders. I was, too, almost his sole companion, as he was mine.

He was a very studious man, much absorbed in the theoretical part of his profession, and greatly given to trying new drugs, and to seeking for remedies as yet undiscovered. All the time that he could spare from the active practice of medicine he devoted for years to experiments and researches as to the curative properties of all sorts and substances, herbs and minerals forming the chief.

He had a theory that the healing as well as the destructive properties of certain poisons only lacked careful study and development to become of vast practical value, and he devoted a great deal of time to this branch of his researches.

Serpent venom was one of the forms of deadly product on which he based some of his most novel theories. He maintained that a substance of such terrific power for slaying must have equal power as a remedy, if only one could find out for what disease it was to be used, and in what manner it was to be employed.

But what discoveries he made in this direction died with him. He made me always his companion and his confidante in the more important of his researches.

Some months before his death, he placed in my hands a large, old-fashioned pocket-book, bidding me lock it up and keep it safely for him.

"I do not like," he went on to say, "to keep it in my consulting room, or even in my safe; for its contents are so powerful for mischief, that accident on my part, or design on that of some evil-doer, might bring about a terrible catastrophe."

Then he made me sit down beside him and showed me what it was that the pocket-book contained.

It was a series of little packets, of the shape and size of an ordinary teething powder, each neatly folded in white paper, and inscribed with the name and properties of the contents.

My good father had every reason to surround this one of his scientific possessions with unusual care and watchfulness, for each one of these harmless looking little packets contained some dried specimens of the venom of a deadly serpent, the poison that renders the puncture of a snake's fang as deadly as a dagger thrust to the heart, or as a bullet through the brain.

There, in little yellowish, semi-transparent scales, looking like chips of horn, were samples of the venom of the cobra-di-capello, and the krait, and the coral snake, and the lemon snake of India, of the dreaded lance-head of the West India Islands, and of the copper-head spread-adder and rattlesnake of America, besides specimens from other deadly reptiles whose names I had never even heard.

"In their present form, Hester, these specimens are harmless," said my father, as he replaced the papers in the pocket-book; "but a drop or two of warm water, let fall on those innocent looking little scales, would prepare it to mingle with the blood of any living creature, and would suffice to call forth in full power all its fatal properties. Therefore, once more I beg of you to guard very carefully this pocket-book. Its contents are invaluable to me, as I mean to use them in a series of experiments that I am now making on the effects of poisons that act through the blood; so I am anxious, also, not to have them mislaid."

"Come with me, father," I said, "and I will show you where and how safely I will keep this precious deposit."

So I took him to my own room, and unlocked an old-fashioned desk that had belonged to my mother, and revealed to him, concealed in its inmost depths, a

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secret drawer, the existence of which had never been known to its original owner, but which I had found out one day when I had overturned the desk by accident.

He was perfectly satisfied with this place of deposit for his precious collection; so I put it in the drawer and locked the desk again, and never saw or touched the pocket-book any more for many a long day.

Some little time afterwards my father showed me a clipping from an old newspaper—a genuine snake story of the old-fashioned kind. It was the account of a farmer in America who owned a pair of strong leather boots, in which he went one day to inspect a distant pasture. That night, on pulling them off, he remarked to his wife that there must have been a thorn in the leather, as something had scratched his leg. He was taken ill that night and died mysteriously after a very brief illness. His eldest son took possession of the boots, and wore them at the funeral; he, too, died as suddenly and strangely as his father had done. Next, his brother wore the boots, and he, too, fell a victim to some mysterious ailment. The boots were then cut open and examined. Inside the leg of one of them was found protruding the fang of a rattlesnake, the reptile having evidently essayed to bite, and the tooth having broken off in the leather.

"I rather doubt the truth of this story," said my father, when he had finished reading it to me. "The fang of a rattlesnake is hardly strong enough to pierce through leather and, presumably, through a stocking underneath. A metal point dipped in the poison might probably work as much mischief in that way, as its penetrating powers would be so much greater; but scarcely the snake's tooth itself."

But I forgot all about these things when, a few weeks later, my father died very suddenly from an attack of pneumonia, caught by returning through a drenching rain from the bedside of a patient who was dangerously ill; and I was left alone in the world.

I was a little over eighteen when his death took place, and, in accordance with a wish expressed by him on his death-bed, and embodied in the last letter that he ever wrote, my aunt, Mrs. Forbes—my father's widowed sister—came, with her only child, a daughter a year younger than myself, to take up her residence with me.

I fretted greatly against this arrangement, for I felt myself fully capable of looking after my own affairs. And, moreover, I was not very fond either of my aunt or of my cousin Laura. I was a reserved, self-contained young woman, older than my years, both in aspect and character, and devoted to the study of science and to scientific pursuits. My Aunt Caroline and my cousin spent their time in fancy-work and novel reading, to my infinite if concealed disdain. To be sure, my aunt was fond of pottering about the kitchen, and of making pastry and preserves and all sorts of delicate dishes; and Laura contrived to accomplish a great deal of sewing, besides studying French and music. She had, I must confess, a very sweet voice, and sang like a bird. But they were neither of them congenial to me; and, though we got along fairly together, I never ceased to miss the father whose constant companion I had been from my childhood, nor to mourn for his loss.

My aunt, on the day of her arrival, had folded me in her arms and had begged me to consider her as a mother and Laura as a sister; but I could not persuade myself into such a comfortable state of feeling. We were none of us quarrelsome, and so we never quarrelled, and that was the best that could be said of our intercourse.

I spent most of my time, as I had done during my father's lifetime, in chemical experiments, the most practical and least peculiar of which were my attempts at photography.

But I liked to try to carry out some of his unfinished researches into the nature and effects of certain poisons. That branch of medical study possessed for me a singular fascination, though I cannot say that my experiments ever resulted in any startling discoveries.

In the meantime, my aunt and cousin were happy after their own fashion. They made gowns, and wore them, they went out to pay calls as soon as their mourning was laid aside, and they received callers on one day in the week, and they had a deal of talk together over their sewing in their sitting-room upstairs.

Then, too, Laura pursued her studies, as she called them, in a very persevering fashion. She pored over French grammars and dictionaries, and translated passages from the works of Victor Hugo, and practised two hours a day at little foolish songs all about dreaming and dying, so far as I could make out the words. And that was what she called study!

There have been people who said that I never liked Laura because she was so much prettier than I was. But that was all nonsense; I never cared about my own looks.

I knew that my tall, spare figure, deep set, dark grey eyes, very marked features and sallow complexion were all of too masculine a type to attract much admiration; so I never troubled my head as to how I looked or what I wore, and used to turn a deaf ear to all my aunt's mild remonstrances on the subject of the stains left by chemicals or acids upon my luckless figure, and would resist all Laura's playful efforts to remove them. What did it matter if my strong, bony hands were dyed copper-colour one day, and streaked with black the next? They were not handsome at any time. If they had been little and white, and delicately formed like Laura's, they might have been worth taking care of. But I never was jealous of Laura's charms—no, not for a single moment, until—well, I shall tell you about that later.

And yet she was the prettiest creature I had ever seen in all my life—tall and slender, with a swaying, lily-like grace in all her movements, and a transparent complexion whose wild-rose tints varied with every breath that she drew, and great, soft brown eyes with a look like that of a startled fawn in their depths. She had, too, such lovely golden hair, that curled over her brow in little silken rings like those of a baby. Then she had a deep dimple in each cheek, and a long, delicate throat, with a way of carrying her head like that of a young deer. So, altogether, she was very lovely. I never denied the fact—never!

And she was very good-tempered, too. I really think we never had a quarrel but once, and that was when I tried some experiments on her dog, a cur that she had taken charge of because it followed her home one day when she was returning from a walk, and because it looked cold and starved. The dog died, it is true, and Laura cried for two days about it, and would not speak to me for a week afterwards. However, we made it all up, on my promise never to meddle again with any of her pets.

But to this day I cannot understand why she cared so much for a common, ugly creature like that. And my experiment had a wholly satisfactory result. It proved to me that the little yellowish scales contained in the packet marked "Rattlesnake Venom," from the old pocket-book, had lost none of their power. Just a drop

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of warm water on one of them, and the point of a penknife-blade dipped in the viscous fluid thus produced, and a scratch across the animal's quivering, black nose as he was jumping up on my lap—a practice he had, which I much disliked—and good-bye, Tray!

It was more than a year after my father's death that Dr. Adrian Trent first came to take up his residence in our little town of Upton.

Till that time there had been some talk of a successor to Dr. Sennet's practice, but no competitor had presented himself before who had been considered satisfactory. But Dr. Trent had studied in Paris and Berlin after taking his degree, and, but for a constitutional delicacy of health which caused him to avoid the fatigue incidental to a physician's life in a large town, he might readily, with his talent and his engaging address, have made his way to the first rank of his profession. But he preferred the quiet, semi-rural life of a small town like ours.

He had known my father well by reputation, and had often corresponded with him on professional subjects, so he was quite prepared to accept us all as acquaintances. He was a noble looking man, tall and straight of figure, with a countenance that was at once winning and intellectual.

He was unmarried, and his mother had gone to live with his married sister in Ireland; so he was left, so to speak, alone in the world. And, as we were almost the only persons that he knew when he first came to Upton, we naturally saw a good deal of him.

He used to drop in very often of an evening, to talk about my scientific experiments and the medical discoveries of the day with me, and to look over some of my father's notes in manuscript, which I was very glad to show him; and to listen to Laura's music when the talk about new remedies and curious cases became wearisome to him.

It never tired me. I was born, I think, with a genuine talent for the study of medicine, and it was my sole passion till the love that comes to every woman's nature, either as a curse or a blessing, awoke to life in my heart.

I do not know when it was that I first began to love Adrian Trent. He had not been visiting very long at our house before the gossips of the neighbourhood got talking about the fitness of a match between the new doctor and the daughter of the old one; what a good thing it would be for Dr. Trent to marry a girl with a comfortable fortune like myself—for I had been left an heiress in a small way—and how congenial such a marriage would be between the rising physician and myself, my scientific tastes and pursuits being well known.

Of course, this chit-chat could not fail to reach my ears, and I listened to it at first incredulously, and then with a secret delight. For Dr. Trent did assuredly single me out to talk to, and even to consult concerning certain vexed questions in his profession. And then, everybody was exhorting him to take a wife. "You will never get on till you are married, doctor—never! A single man may make his way in other professions, but never in that of medicine!" And, strong-minded and self-contained as I had always been, I suffered myself to yield my whole soul up to the intoxicating dream of loving, and of being loved.

In proportion to the delight and the absorbing nature of the vision was the pang of my awakening.

I shall never forget the evening when my delusion was dispelled.

It was a warm night in June, and I had been suffering all day from a violent headache, which had kept me a prisoner in my own room, and had baffled all my efforts to relieve it. I was particularly anxious to go downstairs, as Dr. Trent had informed me that he meant to call; but the pain and its accompanying sickness had prevented me from even leaving my bed.

I heard the door-bell ring, and the little bustle that announced the arrival of the expected visitor, with a dull feeling of regret; and then I think I must have fallen asleep, for the next thing that I knew was Laura's presence beside my bed, and her tears and kisses on my cheeks, as she whispered:

"Hester! dear Hester! I wanted to be the first to tell you—Dr. Trent and I are engaged to be married. Wish me joy, will you not? I am so happy!"

Well, I congratulated her in due, set terms, my illness serving as an excuse for any coldness or lack of enthusiasm in my words, and also for the wan visage wherewith I presented myself at the breakfast table the next morning, after a sleepless night, filled with bitter repinings, and a fierce struggle against what then seemed to me to be inevitable.

I could not for a moment imagine that a frivolous piano-playing, novel-reading girl like my cousin really could care for an intellectual man like Dr. Trent, or would make him a good wife. But he loved Laura, and he meant to marry Laura, and what was I to do? I could only rage against the decrees of destiny, for as yet I saw no way of setting aside those decrees.

My Aunt Caroline was in the seventh heaven of delight and joyful anticipation, and her raptures, which were openly and continually expressed, nearly deprived me of my senses. She could talk of nothing, all day long, but Laura's engagement, and Laura's approaching marriage, of the little house that Dr. Trent meant to take near the post-office, and of the furniture that his mother was going to give him, and of all the details of the trousseau, till, sometimes, I fairly left the house to escape from these endless talks upon the one recurrent theme.

But worse even than my aunt's chatter was the spectacle that I had continually before my eyes, of the mutual love and happiness of the engaged couple.

If I had not had Dr. Trent's betrothed bride as an inmate of my own home, I think I might in time have grown used to the mental contemplation of his future marriage. But I was forced to witness daily the passionate devotion of the man, that I loved with such fervour and concentration of feeling, bestowed upon another woman.

Often and often I have stolen to my own room with clenched hands, and eyes from which the tears were all scorched away by the fever of my torment, only to pace the floor unceasingly, and to ask from Providence for an escape from my jealous misery. For I grudged every glance, every word, every caress that Adrian bestowed upon Laura. And yet, let me do him justice now if never before; he had not once, in the slightest degree, given me any cause to fancy that he loved me. I was a congenial companion to him, a good comrade, and nothing more.

But time went on, as it always does, even though, like the wheel of Juggernaut's car, it crushes out life, or peace, or human happiness in its pitiless progress.

The wedding-day was fixed for the tenth of September, and that date drew near; and nothing happened to prevent or even to postpone the marriage, as I, in my wild, impotent despair, had prayed that there would.

A week earlier the bridal dress arrived from London. It was simple and inexpensive, as suited the limited means of my aunt; but it was very dainty and aerial,

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being all in soft clouds of transparent muslin, profusely trimmed with some exquisitely fine Valenciennes lace which Mrs. Forbes had kept amongst her treasures for many years.

All the accessories of the dress, such as the orange-blossom wreath, the ample veil of tulle, the white gloves, etc., had been forwarded with it. Also, there came a pair of white silk stockings, of cobweb fineness, and a pair of white satin slippers. These last were the only unsatisfactory adjuncts of the toilette. They fitted perfectly, and were of Parisian make and style; but the shoemaker had neglected to place a bow or rosette of ribbon on the instep, and both Mrs. Forbes and Laura disliked the untrimmed looks of the delicate little shoes.

"I have an idea, Laura," suddenly exclaimed my aunt; "suppose you wear those pretty shoe-buckles that belonged to my grandmother. Such things are all the fashion now, I believe; and they are as pretty as possible, and genuine antiques as well. I'll get them out, and will polish them up, and then we will try their effect."

So the buckles were produced, and were cleaned with whitening, and then rubbed into brightness with a bit of chamois leather, and were pronounced perfectly lovely, and just the thing, by both the mother and the daughter.

Laura's deft fingers soon fastened them into place, and then she put on the shoes to see how the new adornment looked.

"Ah-h-h!" she cried, with a little grimace, "how I have pricked my foot! One of the teeth of the left-hand buckle must be bent out of place. Yes, I see. I must straighten it out before the day comes for me to wear the shoes."

And actually, when she took off the shoe, there was a tiny drop of blood visible on her white-thread stocking.

I once heard a very pious lady remark that she fully believed in the existence of a personal devil. If there was any truth in her belief, the fiend assuredly stood behind me at that moment, whispering suggestions of wickedness in my ear. For, as Laura spoke, and laughingly showed me the little puncture in her white skin as she drew off her stocking, it seemed to me as though something or somebody said to me, distinctly, if inaudibly:

"Anoint the sharp protruding point with the serpent's venom, and Adrian Trent will be free almost as soon as he is fettered."

I started, and shrank away in horror from the very idea; but the whisper went on and on, and pursued me to my own room, and haunted me in my dreams, till I found myself caressing the thought as one might fondle a dangerous animal that had come to crouch at one's feet, and was ready to tear and slay at the word of command.

Even before I had decided to yield to the hideous temptation, I had taken the old pocket-book from its hiding place in my mother's desk, and had chosen out and concealed the paper marked "Rattlesnake Venom," so as to have it already for use in case I made up my mind to use it. Of course, to such mental yieldings and toyings with a criminal intent, there could be but one ending.

The night before the wedding, I rose from my bed about midnight, and stole softly into the next room to mine—our spare-room, where all the bridal finery was spread out all ready for her use.

On the bed lay the dress, with the filmy, vaporous veil falling beside it like a streak of mist, and the gloves and fan in close proximity; and on the dressing-table stood the satin slippers, with their jewelled buckles sparkling in the moonlight.

One of these, the shoe for the left foot, I carried off to my own room. Just a touch, to bend out a little further the sharp tooth of the buckle, and then a coating of yellow, viscous fluid, applied freely with a camel's-hair brush from the hollow of an old pomatum-pot that stood on my chest of drawers, and my work was done. Death, as well as the bride, would stand erect in those dainty shoes on the wedding day.

I went back and replaced the shoe, and I carried the brush and the gallipot to the kitchen, where I thrust them deep down into the smouldering hollows of the range fire. Then I went upstairs, to watch the slow hours of the night in a sort of exultation that left no room for wavering in my purpose, or for repentance.

The wedding was a very brilliant affair. Laura looked lovely in her white dress and aerial veil and wreath of orange blossoms, and Dr Trent was the very realisation of a novel writer's ideal of a handsome, happy bridegroom.

They were married by old Dr Crosland, who had presided at my baptism and at the funerals of my parents, and who wound up his few words of exhortation to the young couple by the wish that they might pass together many happy years.

But, before the breakfast that followed the ceremony was at an end, the young bride was taken alarmingly ill. I had heard her whisper to her mother that she must have hurt her foot in some way, as it was paining her acutely; so I was not altogether surprised when, after growing paler and paler, and evidently struggling against her rapidly increasing indisposition, she finally fell back insensible, and was carried from the room by her husband.

He caused her to be taken at once to his new home, the pretty house that he had taken such pleasure in preparing for her reception, as he declared that he wanted to watch over her every hour and every moment of the day till his darling was restored to health.

But she never rallied from the mysterious stupor that had invaded all her being, and she breathed her last before the noon of the day succeeding her marriage day.

I never saw despair comparable to that of Dr. Trent. When his bride of a few hours was hidden from his sight in the grave, he retired to his desolate home and shut himself up to abandon himself to his grief. Weeks passed before he would resume his professional duties.

My aunt, in the first sharp anguish of her bereavement, insisted upon leaving Upton and going to take up her abode with some relatives in Canada. She could not remain, she said, in a place where everything reminded her of her lost darling.

And it was then that I conceived a project eminently fitted, as it seemed to me, to further the purpose which had become the dominant idea of my life—namely, to induce Doctor Trent to make me his wife. I was to invite his mother to make me a visit of indeterminate length which might be indefinitely prolonged. Doctor Trent and I would thus be brought together in a natural, unforced way, for he could hardly help calling to see his mother after her arrival, and I trusted to the influence of time, to our congeniality of tastes and pursuits, and, above all, to the impression that my fortune might create

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on Mrs. Trent, to bring about the result that I so passionately desired.

Everything worked as smoothly as I could have wished. Mrs. Trent accepted my invitation, and her presence had the desired effect of luring her son to my house. Very soon our old terms of comradeship were renewed, and we held many discussions over medical books and periodicals; for the doctor had resumed the practice of his profession with an ardour born of the very blackness of desolation that surrounded him.

I did not fail to set forth, indirectly, to his mother the extent of my fortune, and the details interested her deeply. Not that she was mercenary or grasping—she had consented readily to the marriage of her son with my penniless cousin; but, when so many hundreds per year, and so much solid property in the way of houses and farms, were to be had for the asking—for I made no effort to conceal from her the extent of my interest in Dr. Trent—it was hardly to be imagined that she would not influence him to ask for it.

And then I think that I was really the only person in whose society and conversation he found the slightest pleasure, after the death of Laura. Not that he ever talked to me about her—her name never was mentioned by him to anybody—but we had many subjects in common and I had, moreover, become a great favourite with his mother, whose tastes and peculiarities I studied as I had never done those of anyone since my father's death.

And so it came to pass that, two years after that tragic wedding-day, Dr. Trent asked me, in a calm, business-like manner, if I would consent to become his wife.

Even as I listened to the words, for the hearing of which I had sinned so deeply, I could not but contrast his wooing with the love-making between Laura and himself—all tenderness and blissful folly, and stolen caresses, and sweet, foolish little speeches. But I had gained my point; the one great object of my existence was attained at last.

We were married very quietly, and, after a brief wedding tour, settled down to our home life.

Old Mrs. Trent did not long survive our marriage. She lived just long enough to be made very happy by the birth of a little granddaughter. I gave her name of Elizabeth to my baby. I did not dare to ask my husband what he would like to have the little one called, for I knew very well that his answer would be "Laura."

We had not been married a month before I realised the fact that the image of his dead wife was still enshrined in the very core of his heart, and that all my love and devotion were powerless to dislodge it.

Even the advent of our little Bessie could not lure him to forget the fair creature that he had called his own for a few tragic hours only. Often he would lock himself in his own room for a period of unbroken soltitude, and he would come forth from those lonely musings pale and haggard, as one under the spell of some fatal disease.

I tried to break in upon these dreary self-communings more than once, but was soon made to comprehend, strong-minded and resolute though I am, that there were certain points concerning which Adrian Trent would brook no interference. Otherwise, he was always kind and gentle—in a languid, indifferent way—to me, as well as to the rest of the world. His little daughter was the only being that ever seemed to arouse in him a spark of genuine interest or affection.

I had won my point it is true. I was his wife, and was called by his name, and ruled over his household; but, as for the rest, the dead woman in her grave possessed his heart and soul—not I. Often, in my bitter realisation of the truth, I had been forced to ask myself if it was indeed worth while to have stained my soul with such blackest guilt, to have gained only the dry husks of what had once been the golden grain of love's richest harvest.

When we had been married a little over nine years, even these were taken from me—Adrian died! His illness was typhoid fever, with all its distressing train of symptoms, and alternations of hope and fear, the latter crystallising finally into the fixedness of despair.

I watched over him faithfully, disregarding fatigue, or the fear of infection, to the very last. And yet his last look, his last word, were not given to me. Just before he died, he turned his head from me, and gazed at a vacant space on the other side of the bed; and, with a smile such as I had not seen on his lips through all the years of our wedded life, he sighed: "Laura! Laura!" and so passed away.

And when I came to set my desolate home in order, I found hidden away in the depths of a great closet in the room that my father, and afterwards my husband had used as a study, a small black trunk, whose only contents were the white dress and tulle veil that Laura had worn on the last day of her life—her wedding-day.

With barely a glance at the contents of the trunk, I closed it once more, and locked it, leaving the key tied to one of the handles at the ends. I knew then over what relics, what reminders of dead happiness, my husband had spent so many hours of mournful meditation, and I did not care to disturb them; for, in truth, I could not endure to look again on the garments that for me were fraught with such terrible associations.

It was long before I rallied from the effects of my bereavement; nor do I think I ever should have done so, had it not been for the presence of my little girl. I had something to live for, since Bessie was left to me. She was a winning, bright-eyed, intelligent little creature, full of caresses and pretty ways, and my all-absorbing devotion to my husband found a renewal in the love that I gave to my only child.

I was born to bestow my affections upon few people. Only three persons had ever really taken possession of my heart; my father, Adrian, and now Bessie. And in her growth, and prettiness, and expanding intellect I found consolation for all my sorrows, except that sometimes a sharp thrill of anguish would remind me of that other mother, whose only child—and she, too, a daughter—I had been the means of snatching from her.

Strangely enough, I had been able to stifle all thoughts of the hand I had had in bringing about Laura's death, so long as my husband lived. But when once I had lost him, and was no longer anything in this world except a mother—wifehood and daughterhood both being past—I was haunted by continual reminiscences, not of the woman who had been my rival, and who had won the chief place in the affections of Adrian Trent, but of the fair-haired girl clinging to her mother's neck, with the faint moan: "Oh, mother, mother, I am so very ill! Cannot Adrian save me? Oh, mother, is this death?"

* * * * *

Yesterday was Bessie's birthday. How long ago that seems. Yes, the twelfth of July—a day always to be marked with presents and pleasures. Just thirteen—almost a woman grown. We were more like sisters than mother

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and daughter. I had always taught her myself, from the alphabet up to history and geography, and the higher mathematics. But yesterday was a holiday, because it was her birthday. It was an intensely hot day, and she was suffering from a headache. I was obliged to go out to see my lawyer on important business, so I made her lie down on the sofa in the disused study, as that was a cool and quiet room; and I bade her good-bye with a kiss, and left her with one of her new books—to occupy her, should she feel disinclined to sleep.

I was gone a long time—a very long time—for some hours, in fact. There were deeds to be signed, and new leases to be made out, and papers to be read over, and directions to be given concerning various pieces of property, and I was thoroughly weary before the whole was brought to a satisfactory conclusion. But the lawyer would not listen to my petitions for a postponement of, at least, part of the business.

"It is so seldom that we get hold of you, Mrs. Trent," he said in a laughing way, "that now you are here you must finish up all your affairs."

At last I was released, and I hastened to return home. The sun was setting, and a cool breeze was springing up, so I promised myself the pleasure of taking Bessie for a drive, if her head were no worse. I threw open the door of the old study gaily calling: "Bessie! Bessie!" as I did so.

But the sight that I beheld there froze the words upon my lips, and the life-blood at my heart.

In the centre of the room stood a vision of Laura Forbes as I had last seen her, clad in her bridal array—a white figure, in filmy robes of yellowish lace and crumpled muslin, and on her feet—oh, Heaven! on Bessie's feet, for I recognised the child at a second glance—were the satin slippers, with their glistening buckles. And she tottered forward, and fell into my arms, with just such a weak, hoarse cry as that which had rung in my ears for sixteen years! "Oh, mother, mother!"

I snatched the slippers from her feet. There, on the instep of her left foot, was a drop or two of blood, and a tiny tear in the lace-worked thread stocking, and underneath just a deep scratch, not half an inch in length, with a livid line running upwards towards the ankle. And that was all—and it was death!

I had come too late. The poison had worked its insidious way throughout her system—aided, doubtless, by the heat of the weather—and all my boasted science, with that of the doctors I summoned, was of no avail.

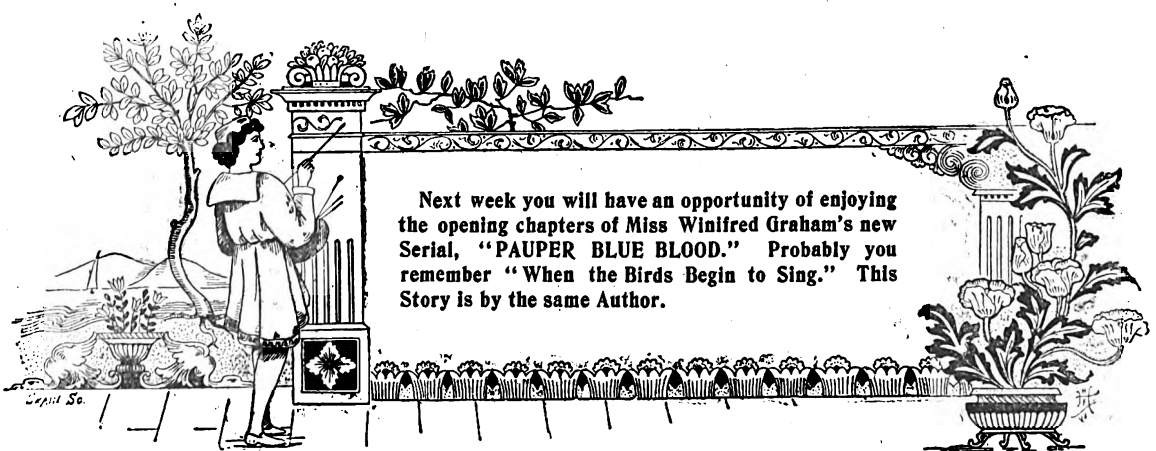
The child, relieved of her headache by rest and slumber, had grown tired of reading, had gone rummaging in the closet, had found the old trunk, with its carefully cherished contents, and had amused herself by dressing up in the garments she had discovered. And so my sin came to find me out, and to exact from me full retribution, for Bessie died last night, and with her departed the last tie that bound me to life.

* * * * *

It is written in the Scriptures. "A life for a life," and also: "He that smiteth with the sword, shall perish by the sword." I mean to do justice on myself, the murderess, and to make use of the same means by which I sent my cousin to an untimely grave. I have set my house in order. I have destroyed the shoe buckles; and I have burned the pocket book, with its death-dealing contents, leaving out only one scale from the paper marked "Rattlesnake Venom." Now for a drop or two of warm water on the little yellowish fragment, and I dip into the solution the point of one of my husband's lancets. So—a mere touch, a puncture of the vein in the hollow of my arm—and my work is done. The lancet is very sharp—it gave me no pain.

I wonder why I am haunted, not by a vision of Bessie's face nor yet of Laura's, but by the remembrance of the wistful brown eyes of the dog that I killed so long ago. I am growing stupid, I think. I will creep into the next room, and take my seat beside the bed where Bessie lies, looking so calm and fair. Is it Bessie, or is it Laura that I see before me, in that crushed wedding dress? Bessie—Laura—Laura—Bessie—you both seem very near to me to-day. And what are those words from Shakespeare that keep ringing in my ears? "Sharper than a serpent's tooth"—sharp as a serpent's tooth—sharp——

Arnold Weevil.



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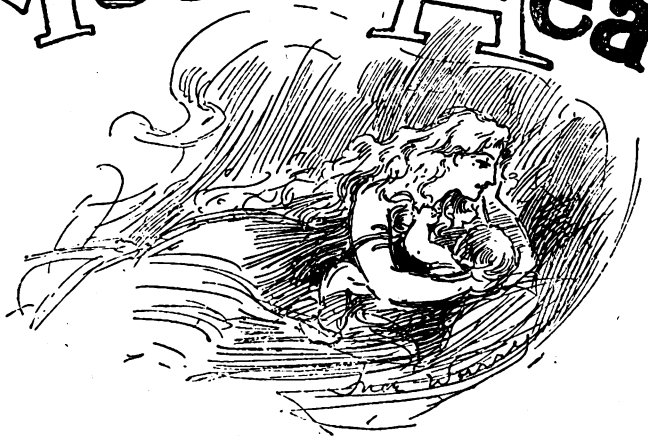
The Moor's Head



"CURSES are nonsensical at all times, Thorndyke, and to talk of them descending from generation to generation—bah!" and the speaker flipped the ashes from his cigar and curled his lip scornfully.

The younger man changed his easy position and smiled.

"Of course," said he, "except in this single case. But because it is in my own single family; and because I have the written record of it—not relying upon 'old woman tales,' as you express it—I'm afraid I do rather put faith in that wretched curse, much as I would like not to."

"Then I say you are an ass. Any man would be an ass to believe such a lot of pure——"

"Tommy-rot?" suggested Thorndyke. "That is what you'd like to say if you were not so elegant, I know—so I'll say it for you. Yes, it looks very much like that, I know, but there's no help for it—I do believe in this particular curse, as I said—and no amount of ridicule can change it. I've tried to change my mind, but—well, perhaps, I haven't such small change with me," and he smiled again at the little pleasantry.

Carwin picked up the sword which lay upon the table, and which had brought up the whole subject, and looked at it curiously. It was a heavy old weapon, with jewelled handle and guard, and though the blade was rusty and nicked now, one could see it had been used in more than one deadly conflict, and had seen hard service and years of use in the dim past. It had belonged to a very ancient ancestor of Thorndyke's, and had been handed down to him, with the few other family relics that his father had managed to collect the last time he had been abroad. Beside the sword lay a yellow old paper, from which Thorndyke had been reading when Carwin, his best friend, dropped in for the evening.

"Then what I gather from your narrative," said the latter, after turning the weapon about in his hands a few moments, "is, that this is the very sword that did the deed. Am I right?"

"You are."

"And the story is, that away back in the dark ages, before people found that killing every man who crossed you was not the shortest way to heaven, one of your respected forefathers"—nodding to the row of dim old portraits which ran around the cosy room above the bookshelves—"owned this sword and was a knight. When the Crusades got to be the fashion, he was seized with a desire to wear a cross upon his shoulder—and also cross his feet when he was buried—and girding this self-same weapon about him, he gat himself unto the wars and whooping it up, as it were, racing off like the rest of humanity to fight with the Saracens and have a good time generally. And as he had a daughter—a young and pretty daughter—whom he could not take along with the rest of his impedimenta, he left her at home. How do I come on?"

"Finely; proceed," said Thorndyke, twirling the sword about his head and showing himself no mean fencer as he did so.

"Before leaving, this charmingly dull-witted individual—pardon me for calling him names, Thorndyke, but he *was* a chump—called all the servants up and made them a speech, in which he told of the great things he intended to do while away, and instructed them to be good boys and girls and mind their mistress's slightest wish, or prepare to hunt for other places when he returned from his little jaunt. Then he turned over the keys to her and left.

"When he got to the wars, he did some big fighting and distinguished himself, as you Thorndykes have a faculty of doing, and though he did not write home every week, as you do, he picked up a young Moor and shipped him back with letters and money for household expenses for the castle. The Moor was a slave, of course, but a handsome fellow—quiet, grave, and intelligent, and he made a great impression on everyone connected with the castle, the mistress included. He got there about Christmas time, and settled down as if he had intended coming all his life, but only just found the opportunity. For a while the other servants liked him; but as soon as they found he was fast becoming a favourite with the daughter of the house, their mistress, they veered round and took to despising him in good old English fashion, and proceeded to make things as hot for his Moorship as possible. Naturally enough, this had the effect of making the mistress like him all the more—no, I did *not* say all the Moor—and to show them she was the head of the house while papa was away, she took the Moor as her constant attendant. He waited upon her everywhere, excepting in her boudoir, and was with her constantly whenever she drove or walked about the grounds of that palatial pile.

"The Moor, being with her so much, very naturally, too, fell in love with her, and, as girls then were no more proof against the wiles of foreigners than they are in this matter-of-fact century, she succumbed to his dusky

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charms, and one morning, bright and early, they slipped across the great lawn and into the little chapel in the edge of the woods, where, by alternately brow-beating and cajoling the deaf and blind old parson, they were married. Am I not interesting, old man?"

"Very," said Thorndyke, laughing at his friend's frank manner: "there is added charm to the tale when 'tis told by you."

"Thank you. Well, they were good and married, and all went well——"

"Until a year had passed," put in Thorndyke.

"Until a year had passed. Then a little one was born—a tiny, light-skinned Moor, with blue eyes like its mother, and other features copied in miniature from its proud father. Of course there was a great stir when the youngster came, and the truth leaked out; but it was almost forgotten in the additional excitement caused by the return of my lady's father. An uninformed servant who had heard only half of the truth met him at the draw-bridge, and told him of the supposed-to-be-sad news of his daughter's marriage; and the old gentleman still with the blood of war in his nostrils and heeding nothing else but the fact, as he thought it was, that his name had been dragged in the dust by his child, dashed into the castle and pushed his way unceremoniously into her room, where she lay a sweet picture upon her bed, the child in her young arms, the sunlight streaming through the open window over her and the little one.

"Without a word, the half-crazed Crusader snatched the baby from its mother's arms and, swinging it about his head, he dashed it down to the courtyard below, where it lay dead almost before it had breathed the breath of life. Then, before the terrified stricken young mother could realise what had happened, the Moor appeared in the doorway, his dark face wreathed in a Christian-like smile, waiting to greet the father. With an imprecation, the Crusader sprang at him, and ere the Moor could draw and defend himself, he was run through by the sword that had been the death of many a Saracen before him, and lay weltering in his own blood at his father-in-law's feet. Then the girl-widow understood, and mad with grief and horror at the terrible deed, she pulled herself to her knees, and stretching her white arms out, her yellow hair glistening like burnished gold in the sunlight, she cursed the wretched man—cursed him as only a woman of that day and age could curse one. As the last awful word dropped from her lips, she sank back upon the bed unconscious, and a few hours after she was dead.

"From that hour the knight was a changed man. Serious and grave, with a haunted, frightened look upon his hitherto rugged countenance, he went about his estate, a broken, decrepit old man, hardly a shadow of his former self. A few years later he, too, died, but—but—I believe that is as far as I can go unaided, old man," concluded Carwin abruptly, turning to Thorndyke.

"Why—why—you leave off in the most interesting part, Carwin," said the other, resting from his exercise, which he had kept up in a lazy way, while the other talked. "The old knight died, to be sure, but have you forgotten how? Well, he got into trouble with another old fellow over some land, and the other chap fell upon him, unarmed though my forefather was, and slew him. As he fell, he turned his head and gazed on the wound, which was in his right side, and which he tore the clothing from, and after one glance he covered his eyes with one hand, shrieking out something about the Moor's head as he did so.

"There, in the shadow of his castle, he died a few moments later, and when the servants came running to find him—having heard his death screams—they knew the first curse had fallen, for from the gaping wound in their master's side a clot of blood had risen and taken the form of a head. And to their excited imagination, and from the colour of the dark fluid, it took upon itself the resemblance to the Moor whom the knight had slain as unmercifully as his enemy had just put an end to his life.

"Then they remembered the curse, and looked at each other frightened and awed. The old knight's only son lived to be thirty, when one day he wounded himself in the arm. He thought nothing of it until the Moor's head appeared, when he lost his nerve, too, and died the next day. And so for generations it ran, and never once has the eldest son of the eldest son died naught but a violent death, and his death has always been preceded by the appearance of this silent messenger, who has never given a false warning. That is the legend, and I'm sorry to say I sometimes feel as if my death would have to be a violent one to carry out the wretched curse. Being the eldest son of my father, it would end with me were I to die now."

"I trust so; but pray be a little more cheerful, and talk of something else besides dying just to accommodate this charming malediction. You are good for many years yet, and—be careful, Thorndyke!"

The other man was lunging at a heavy old bronze plaque which hung on the wall opposite him as Carwin spoke, and the sword bent and snapped back again at each thrust in a manner unpleasant to the latter's ears, as if foreboding some evil. Indeed, hardly had he spoken, when there was a sharp crack of breaking steel, and the point of the weapon whistled back from the wall. Thorndyke sprang aside, but too late; the rusty tip of the sword—broken only an inch or two from the point—had already reached him, and sank deep into his breast, just below the heart, and with a suppressed groan of pain he tumbled into his friend's outstretched arms.

Carrying him to the cushioned seat near the fireplace, Carwin tore the coat and shirt from about the wound, and, taking a firm grip upon the bit of steel, which just showed itself above the wound, he withdrew it slowly with his muscular fingers and hurled it into the glowing fire.

As he did so, Thorndyke opened his eyes and struggled to a sitting position, though the other strove to keep him upon the pillows.

"Oh, Heavens!" screamed the wounded man wildly. "Look, Carwin, look! It is—*it is the Moor's head!* And I—I——" He stopped, a shiver passed over his now damp body, and he swayed against the wall, and from there slid down to the couch, dead.

Carwin, with a curious light in his eyes, glanced about the room as an animal might, and then back at the Moor's head. Then he swept one hand down over his friend's bare breast and tore the clot from the wound, squeezing it viciously in his hand as he did so.

A moment passed during which there was no sound save the deep and nervous breathing of the man crouching beside the dead body of Thorndyke. Then slowly the head appeared again, and again he swept it off and crushed it in his hand.

A third time the head came, and Carwin, with staring eyes and chalk-like face, staggered to his feet. Then, with one mad look at the horrible thing, he rushed to the door, and, wrenching it open, screamed for help.

HARRY ROGERS.

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The Carriage will Call at Half-past Seven.

"BY Jove, old man, this is luck! I haven't seen you for a long time, though I met your ex-fidus Achates, Jack Olmsted, often enough. What is the trouble between you two, anyways?"

"Do you mean to say that you've never heard about the little unpleasantness, Dick?" asked Bob Ferrers.

"Never. Girl in the case, I suppose. Tell me about it, won't you? That is if you may. No—I've nothing to do. How could I be occupied here? For unparalleled loneliness, commend me to a summer hotel, where one is a stranger to all the other people, and the other people are all intimate."

"But you know some of the crowd here; in fact the leading characters of my story, Ellen Barton and Olmsted."

"Olmsted is well enough, but he's with the Thorpes all the time, and I don't like them! As for the little Barton girl, ugh! she'd take first prize in an ugly woman show."

"She isn't good-looking, I'll admit; but she's a good little soul, retiring, modest, and all that. My chief objection to her is that she is a Barton, and the Bartons are such uncommonly vulgar upstarts."

Personal gossip in public places is something worse than folly; it is a crime. While Dick Vane and Ferrers were discussing her affairs, Ellen Barton sat in a vine-clad summer-house within ten feet of them. Supposing that the men would walk on, she kept perfectly quiet; their words hurt her. The truth is apt to hurt. It was small comfort to be called a "good little soul." She knew that she was homely and her heart ached at the knowledge.

Pretty women cannot sympathise with her. They do not know what it is to be shunned by men, or accorded a word, now and then, too obviously from pity. They cannot realise that to the poor "wallflower," a ball-room is a place of humiliation and torture.

Had Ellen Barton pleased herself, she would have lived the life of a recluse; but her family could not understand her distaste for society. She was the only child, and to them her lack of beauty was not apparent. The Bartons lived in a small house, and dined in the front room of the basement. They had risen above horse-hair sofas, but they had succumbed to the evil influence of figured cotton-back plush.

Any and every form of entertainment was a "party" to them. They had heard of "five o'clock teas," but disapproved of such functions. "Tea at six o'clock, as we always have it, is early enough for me," Mr. Barton was wont to say. Ellen went to the church sociables with her father or her uncle. Other girls went with young men. Ellen eyed them enviously. The young men never invited her.

Every summer the Bartons spend four weeks at the seaside, and every summer, when they were ready to start, Mr. Barton made the same remark: "Now, Ellen, keep your eyes open. You might make a catch while you're away. Who knows!"

Ellen almost hated her uncle when he said that. She had heard it ever since she left school at sixteen, and now she was twenty-five.

At first she, too, had had vague ideas of someone who was to come and rescue her from the sociables and the other things she hated. Then to hope succeeded bitterness. She saw that men did not even dislike her; they were absolutely indifferent. She realised that the longing for love—that is the curse or the blessing of a woman's heart—was destined to be unfulfilled, and she hated other happier, prettier girls.

She was at the Brastead Hotel because her family liked the place. It was noisy and vulgar, but that they did not know. To them it was the abode of all that was fashionable and magnificent. Their names were copied from the hotel register into local papers, and Mrs. Barton bought numbers of these precious papers and sent some to friends: others she kept in a desk with her love-letters from Mr. Barton, Ellen's first shoes, and similar treasures.

Ellen sitting in the summer-house, had been thinking over these things. The conversation she overheard was but a crowning torture.

A convenient bench tempted Vane and Ferrers. They sat down, lit their cigars, and continued their criticism of the Bartons. It was too late to retreat, so Ellen was forced to listen.

"Those Bartons are worse than stupid," said Ferrers; "but, to do them justice, if they are insufferably aggressive, it's all for Ellen. How they push that girl forward! Throw her at a fellow's head, you know. That's why Olmsted and I are out."

"Great Scott! You don't mean to say you quarrelled about Ellen Barton?"

Vane laughed as he spoke, and to Ellen the laugh seemed infinitely worse than words. It was so scornful and contemptuous.

"Yes, it was about Ellen indirectly. You remember May Seymour's wedding? You know that everyone in our church knew it was to take place Tuesday, the 9th of February, long before the cards were out. Well, early in January Mrs. Barton wrote to Olmsted saying that she wished to see him about something particular. Of course he went, and what do you suppose the something was? She wanted him to escort Ellen to May's wedding. She told him she would engage a carriage which would call for him on the evening in question. How was that for an ambitious mamma? Jack is quite the bright, particular star of our church, and he's pretty well fixed financially. All the mothers run after him, but no one had ever been quite so open about it as Mrs. Barton. Jack was taken by surprise and could think of no excuse; and, anyway, he's an awfully good chap, so he said he'd be delighted to oblige her. Then he went out and kicked himself.

"The day Miss Seymour's invitations came out Jack received a second note from Mrs. Barton reminding him of his engagement to accompany Ellen. Poor boy, he wasn't likely to forget it! She added a postscript to say

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that a carriage had been ordered and that it would call for him at half-past seven.

"Jack wrote and thanked her.

"The Saturday preceding the ninth of February Jack met Mr. Barton in the city. You know old Barton, pompous and condescending to everyone, including his superiors. He shook hands with Jack. 'By-the-way,' said he, 'my wife has to dme to tell you, if I saw you, that a carriage has been ordered to take you and Ellen to Miss Seymour's wedding. It will call for you at half-past seven. Be punctual.'

"Sunday morning on his way to church Ellen herself stopped him. She seemed embarrassed. Finally she blurted out that Jack was very kind to act as her escort, and that if he did not wish to he need not. She said that she felt mortified that her mother should have asked him. Jack is a gentleman, so he told a lie. He said that, even if Mrs. Barton had not suggested it, he had intended asking her to go with him. The ugly duckling turned the colour of a boiled lobster, and thanked him so gratefully that he in turn thanked heaven that he had fibbed. Then Ellen went on:

"'Mamma told me to tell you that she'd send a carriage for you and then you're to come for me. The carriage will call at half-past seven.' Jack kept his face straight, but fled as soon as possible. After church he saw Ellen's uncle bearing down on him. Perhaps you've met her uncle? No? Well, he's a genial, jovial old person, illiterate and vulgar. He slapped Olmsted on the back and chuckled. He's particularly awful when he chuckles.

"'Well, my boy, going to take the little girl out, eh? Sly dog! Young folks will be young folks. Te!—he—he—he.' With one of his maddening chuckles he poked Jack in the ribs. 'There's a carriage been ordered,' said he; 'mind you behave now, you and the girl in the carriage. Te—he—he! No nonsense, eh? The carriage'll call at half-past seven.' Another poke in the ribs, another chuckle, and he waddled away.

"Poor Jack waited for the other Bartons to get away before he left the church. Mrs. Barton saw him, but was too far away to speak, so she motioned with her lips, and Jack knew what she was saying; 'Don't forget; the carriage will call at half-past seven.'

"When she had disappeared Jack turned to go, but he saw the sexton coming towards him. Ever see our sexton? He shuffles and talks in a whisper, and he'd make you think of funerals even if he didn't combine an undertaking establishment with the livery stables he runs. He seemed to have some weighty matter on his mind as he approached. He was more mysterious than usual. He looked round suspiciously to see if anyone was watching or listening. Then he put one finger on his lips and winked at Jack.

"'Perhaps you know why I want to see you, sir?' said he.

"'No, I don't,' said Jack.

"'Well, it's just this way, sir. A certain lady—to speak plainly, it's Mrs. Barton, sir—has engaged a carriage of me, for next Tuesday evening. She's going to send it for you at half-past seven. She feared she might not see you herself, so asked me to tell you. The carriage will call at half-past seven. Good-day, sir.'

"Jack felt like cursing the carriage, but he didn't. A lot of us fellows were in his room that evening, and he was so annoyed at the Barton tactics that he told us the whole story. He didn't realise that he was doing a foolish thing then, but he did the next Tuesday morning, for when he entered his office over a hundred post-cards lay on his desk. On every card he read the hated words: 'The carriage will call at half-past seven.'

"Then there were pictures of a couple, presumably Ellen and himself, getting into a carriage or getting out. One card was labelled 'The Result,' and there was again Ellen with her hand in Jack's, and her uncle Joe, as a fat cherub, hovering over them and saying: 'Bless you, my children.'

"There's nothing more to tell; except that he took Ellen to the wedding, and was as kind and attentive as possible to her. But he has avoided the Bartons ever since, and he'll kill the man that says to him: 'The carriage will call at half-past seven.'"

"But, Bob, in spite of the length of your story, you haven't explained why you and Olmsted quarreled," said Vane.

"Oh, it was a mere trifle. I sent the post-cards and he found it out."

"Is that all? The ending is commonplace. You led me to expect a tragic *dénoûment*. Hullo! it's almost dinner time. We may as well go back to the hotel."

The two men strolled away, quite unconscious that in the summer-house homely little Ellen Barton was crying as though her heart would break. So, this was the way men spoke of her! What hurt her most was to know that Olmsted had lied to her. It had always been a comfort to think that once one had actually wanted to take her out. Without realising it, she had made a hero of the only man that had ever shown her any attention. She felt that she could never again face him, or any of the men that knew the story. She had received the most crushing blow ever dealt her in her life, that had been made up of slights and humiliation. The intensity of shame overpowered her. She could not reason calmly. What was the use of living at all when there was nothing to live for? She wasn't merely lonely, she was stupid, she had no talents, nothing to atone for her lack of beauty. People ridiculed her. Ridicule is harder to bear than anything else. The world was harsh and cruel. She hated everyone, and most of all herself.

"I wonder if homely people go to heaven?" she murmured.

* * * * *

That night Dick Vane came up to Ferrers, in the smoking-room of the —— hotel.

"Say, old man, where's Olmsted?" said he; "I want to chaff him about that story you told me."

"For Heaven's sake, hold your infernal tongue! Haven't you heard? Miss Barton was in the summer-house this afternoon. She heard every word we said, and——"

"And what?" asked Vane, thoroughly shocked at the news.

"And someone saw her leave the summer-house and—and go towards the lake. And they have only just recovered her dead body."

Ferrers' voice rose as he spoke; his face was ghastly in its pallor. He paused a moment, then cried fiercely: "Confound you, is the *dénoûment* tragic enough, now?"

JULIA SCHLOMM.

This is a sad little story, isn't it? But cheer up! The second volume of PEARSON'S MAGAZINE *begins with the July number, published next Wednesday.*

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THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

No. 8.

TWO PRIZES OF £1 1s. EACH.

BELOW will be found the eighth batch of ten problems in the new series of "THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM." Two prizes of a Guinea each are offered weekly to those competitors who answer correctly the greatest number of these problems. Consolation prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

RULES:

1. All solutions to be written on one sheet of paper.
2. Don't write the questions. Simply put the numbers and the answer against each.
3. Each set to contain the £100 coupon (found on second page of cover) for the current week.
4. All attempts to be in by Monday, June 29th.
5. Mark your envelope "Gymnasium, Number 8."

(71.) The initials read downwards and finals read upwards of the words defined below signify "violent."

1. A vehicle.
2. The two-toed sloth.
3. A violent tropical wind.
4. Repeat.
5. Paining.

(72.) The following is a cypher sentence. Transcribe it.

84m2 m4n0h8 62f4r2 h38 9210h, h2 pl1729 3n my h1n98 1 l1rg2, 4l9-f18h34n29 p47k20-b44k, b3993ng m2 147k 30 5p 1n9 k22p 30 81f2ly f4r h3m.

(73.) WORD SQUARES.

1. Belonging to you.
   A monster.
   To incite.
   River growth.
2. Mental power.
   A notion.
   Did lend.
   Behind time.

(74.) The following letters and words placed one on the other will form a diamond shape, the central letters spelling a word signifying "finished."

One of the first six letters of the alphabet, a species of deer, crystallised sugar, a university magistrate, young ducks, formed by work, covered in mud, a meadow, in "end."

(75.) If i=37½, e=2½, u=21½, z=59, t=47, what word on this page has the highest numerical value?

(76.) The British Footguards, numbering, say, 5,249 men armed with the Lee-Metford rifle are placed on a plain 1,500 yards long, at the other end of which are the Footguards of the German army, numbering, say, 6,464 men, armed with the Mannlicher rifle. The Germans advance to the attack, and at 1,300 yards both sides open fire, with the result that in the first three minutes the Germans lose 72 men and the British 57. During the next eight minutes the superior shooting of the British continues to tell, and 27 Germans fall every minute to 15 Britons. At 1,000 yards the proportion has increased by 16 British to 32 Germans per minute, and this average is maintained till the end. How long will it be before the Germans are annihilated, and how many British guardsmen, if any, will remain alive.

(77.) The following sentence when rearranged will spell a readable sentence.

He is ambiguously tender that speaks up his language in bashful confidences, not when a precise man would draw his own word he hints, to the preoccupied subject every preoccupation of will the wherewith in assimilates he spoken enters

(78.) My first is to encircle.
My second is an adjective.
My third is a "turn."
My whole is "indirect."

(79.) If you paid 6d. for every word of eight letters and over on this page, what is the total amount you would pay?

(80.) How many words are there on this page? Do not count figures or punctuation marks.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM COMPETITION.—No. 5.

MOST of the competitors in this competition stumbled over the mathematical problem No. 44, while many who sent this in correctly, forwarded a very feeble anagram for No. 48. The work of adjudicating has therefore been an exceptionally delicate one. The result arrived at awards one of the guineas to Miss Margaret Hellfarth, Bower Lodge, Pyrland Road, Richmond, and the other to Mr. Geo. Humphreys, 19, Colville Street, Nottingham.

Consolation prizes in the form of pencil-cases have been sent to the competitors whose names appears below.

Miss D. Gordon, The Courtyard, Altham; Mrs. Somerville, 14, Musard Road, W.; S. T. Green, Well Close House, Fenton, Staffordshire; T. G. Ushers, Baltinglass, co. Wicklow; Miss S. T. Jones, 37, Aberfeldy Street, Poplar, E.; Miss G. Goldsmith, 56, Campbell Road, Southsea; T. W. Harrison, 27, Queen Street, North Ormesby, Middlesbrough; Mrs. M. E. Mennie, 99, Queen Street, Peterhead; R Trail Hill, 3, Merchant Street, Peterhead; T. Mason, Hawkhead Terrace, 31, Seedhill Road, Paisley; H. St. George, 37, Lawrence Road, Southsea; A. H. Hamilton, 43, Dalmeney Road, Tufnell Park; C. B. Keston, 11, Queen's Road, Bayswater, W.; B. M. Perks, 97, Burlington Street, Greenheys, Manchester; C. Willoughby, 48, Benedict Street, Stanley Road, Bootle; J. Tanner, 74, Hampton Park, Bristol; W. A. Breffitt, 139, Duke Street, Brooks Bar, Manchester; G. Russell, 68, Strahan Road, Bow; E. Friend, Eastern Road, Romford; A. James, Gorringe Park, Mitcham, Surrey; W. C. Caird, 12, Franklin Street, South Tottenham; F. P. Whiteside, 24, Bowden Street, Glodwick, Oldham; W. H. Page, H.M.S. *Hero*, Portsmouth; Mrs. A. Sellurs, 69, Clinton Road, Mile End Road, E.; C. Holligan, Ashton House, Hampton Hill, Middlesex; Miss A. Vincent, 16, Crowhurst Road, Brixton, S.W.; W. H. Deeble, 25, Arwenack Street, Falmouth; P. Sweeney, 124, Hartnup Street, Anfield, Liverpool; W. S. Cool, 28, Thirsk Road, Lavender Hill; Miss L. M. Searle, Woodside Court, Croydon; A. Dawson, Sunny Bank, Frodsham, Cheshire; Miss M. Joseph, 88, Hyde Park Mansions, N.W.; J. Rawling, 3, Ingram Street, Huntingdon; J. H. Kidd, "Mauldeth," Heaton Mersey, near Manchester; A. H. Barlow, 115, Walmer Road, Notting Hill, W.; J. Manby, 1, Upper Bow, Edinburgh; Miss B. Wood, Bower Lodge, Pyrland Road, Richmond.

KEY TO NO. 5 COMPETITION.

KEY No. 41.—Inspection.

KEY No. 42.—Excellent.

KEY No. 43.—There are several words value 75, such as paragraph, properties, appears, prepaid, approach, etc., all of which have been counted correct.

KEY No. 44.—16⅔ miles.

KEY No. 45.

R	E	A	P.
E	L	S	E.
A	S	P	S.
P	E	S	T.

KEY No. 46.

F	lounde	R	P icaroo N
O	bsolet	E	L obeli A
L	ongbo	W	A nagra M
L	ibrett	O	C ingales E

KEY No. 47.—He scanned the yawl, as he stood there, and his keen and practised eye took in and fully appreciated the beauty of her lines.

KEY No. 48.—The following anagrams, sent in answer to this problem, are above the average:

Bag the dread spy. Spread thy badge. G. B. Hay's departed.

KEY No. 49.—At the commencement a physical impression was sufficient to dissipate this hallucination. Without attracting attention I arose and went to my chamber. A dash of cold water on the forehead restored calm. The spectre disappeared and I returned smiling.

KEY No. 50.—Examination.

RESULT OF PICTURE PUZZLE COMPETITION.—No. 7.

09	5	56	2	8	41	35	6
22	18	45	19	71	61	9	50
16	46	30	21	28	43	26	49
62	64	33	7	78	40	38	17
12	69	57	36	3	74	58	79
67	55	27	23	88	13	53	48
47	61	99	37	24	73	54	70
15	94	89	72	42	25	20	87
32	01	78	76	18	85	14	69
4	63	29	83	11	68	31	77
34	99	1	98	52	08	82	44

No competitor succeeded in correctly putting together all the squares in this puzzle picture. The £10 prize has therefore been divided between the two competitors who were only one square wrong, Mr. J. Hughes, 15, Royal Name Place, New Cross, and Miss A. Beer, 2, Keppel Terrace, Stoke, Devonport, to each of whom a cheque of £5 has been sent. Consolation prizes have been sent to the following:

G. D. Taylor, 23, Ernest Street, Rhyl; Miss B. Keeley, "Eastgate," Ashford Road, Maidstone; J. Hughes, 15, Royal Naval Place, New Cross; A. Hook, 9, Canterbury Place, Lambeth Road; J. A. Rigg, 14, Newport Road, Manningham, Bradford; W. Kay, junr., 56, Lady Lawson Street, Edinburgh; Miss Cox, 2, Claremont Villas, Tudor Road, Norbiton; J. T. Roberts, 3, Sand Street, Pwllheli, North Wales; T. N. Sheehan, Dining Rooms, High Street, Tunbridge Wells; Arthur Hook, 9, Canterbury Place, Lambeth Road, S.E.

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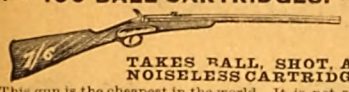

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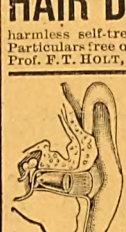

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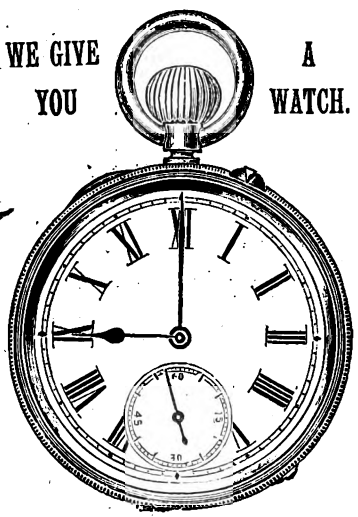

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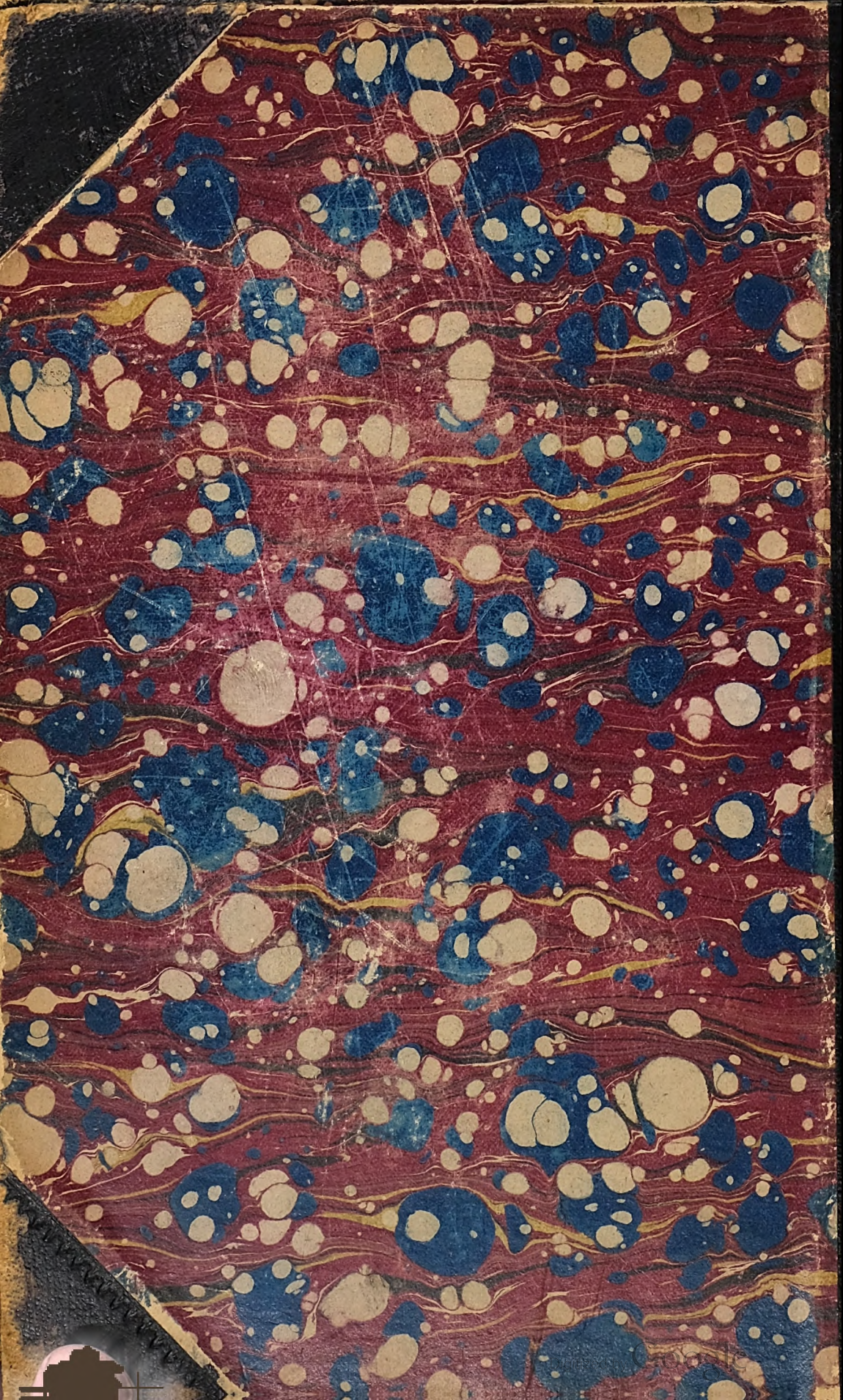
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